

Virgin reads: "Because of thee, thou full of grace, rejoiceth all creation, the angelic hosts and the human race: thou consecrated temple and mystical paradise, thou praise of virginity, of whom God was incarnate, and became man, He who is our God from all eternity. For of thy bosom he made a throne, and thy womb he made more spacious than the heaven. Because of thee, thou full of grace, rejoiceth all creation: glory to thee!"

However, the greatest good that this prayer book can do is to fulfill its primary purpose. This is to build up a knowledge of their faith and a devout practice of it among Romanian Catholics here in America and elsewhere. In view of the persecution that the Church endures in their ancestral land, it can inspire its readers to keep the oppressed before their minds and to bring them aid. It is hoped that *A Manual of Prayers and Devotions* will have the wide circulation and the constant use that its high quality deserves. Its authors likewise deserve commendation for their success in executing a difficult task and for making a notable contribution to devotional literature.

John K. Ryan

#### The Missionary Nature of the Church

There is no need to insist how foreign it is to the virtue of charity, which embraces both God and men, for the members of Christ's Church not to think of those unfortunate souls who live in error outside the Fold. Surely the obligation of charity, which binds us to God, demands not only that we strive to increase by every means within our power the number of those who adore Him "in spirit and in truth" but also that we try to bring under the rule of the gentle Christ as many other men as possible in order that "the profit in his blood" may be the more and more fruitful and that we may make ourselves the more acceptable to Him to Whom nothing can possibly be more pleasing than that "men should be saved and come to the knowledge of truth."

\_ Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical *Rerum ecclesiae*, issued Feb. 28, 1926.

## TRUTH AND NOVELTY IN THEOLOGY

(Editor's note: *The following article appeared in the Osservatore Romano on Monday, March 15, of this year. Because of the intense interest it has aroused among theologians throughout the world, and because of the timeliness of its teaching, we have sought and obtained permission to publish a translation of this document for the readers of The American Ecclesiastical Review.*

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Two things at least must strike anyone who has carefully read, the great Encyclical of His Holiness Pope Pius XII on sacred liturgy: first, the number of errors that document was called upon to condemn and the many deviations and alterations it had to correct; second, the fact that the Church Magisterium by remaining ever faithful to its traditions does not fail to find a way both for advancing the knowledge of revealed truth and for promoting a more intensive practice of virtue.

Every theologian will have to keep in mind its doctrinal clarification on the essence of the holy sacrifice of the Mass; every one of the faithful will understand better his own way of taking part in that divine Sacrifice. A great jurist said that he has been assisting at Mass in a more enlightened way ever since he read that beautiful theological explanation.

Theologians as well as the more learned among the faithful find in the Magisterium of the Church a brilliant proof of a magnificent fact, namely, that truth in its intimate nature remains immutable even then when it manifests itself inexhaustible in the novelties of its applications. A retrograde attitude no less than an adventurous daring lacks the Catholic trade-mark even though both may happen to be the style of some scholars.

The Church does not expect individual theologians to be infallible but she wants them to be intelligent and discreet. Unfortunately, discretion, which was called the mother of virtues by St. Benedict, is like gold, something that everybody values, but which not everybody has.

It is a serious thing to see how some theologians care much less to learn, that is, to acquire in a scientific way the treasures gathered by the theological discipline, than to build up for themselves with

methods that are purely subjective and more or less arbitrary, fascinated as they are by novelty rather than by truth, and more satisfied with their own work than with the divine gift offered by the Church. They speak of evolution, polygenism, ectimicalism, and the like, with such a condescending readiness for hypotheses and novelties that are scientifically unchecked, as to be a dishonor to Catholic studies. Their intentions may be honorable, but intentions are not enough in theology. Even in practical life, intentions must be aligned with truth.

Certain theories which, after a false vogue, had disappeared under a general disqualification begin to rise again by the instrumentality of some theologians who grow enthusiastic about them and remain deaf to the authoritative voice of Shepherds and of learned men, a voice raised to disillusion the unwary.

I have known priests who, having returned home after a visit in Rome, where they had occasion to speak with some prelate and even with the Holy Father himself, have broadcast as an approval of their own personal ideas what had been only an encouragement to serious study, to a sincere apostolate, to real merit.

I have read in no less than a diocesan bulletin the statement that we do not know what matter really is, where it differs from life, from the spirit, if such a difference exists!

The call of our Pontiff for a more scientific and less arbitrary study of theology deserved to be heeded better than it has been. The supreme Teacher of Faith had given the warning to all in a most limpid and precise form. Who does not remember the allocution of the Holy Father to the members of the XXIX General Congregation of the Society of Jesus on September 17, 1946, and the other of September 22, of the same year, addressed to the Capitular members of the Order of Preachers in Castel Gandolfo? Those words have lost nothing of their timeliness and efficacy, and no self-respecting theologian, no chancellor, no rector of higher institutions can afford to forget them. If one does not penetrate the intrinsic value of those directives, even from a purely scientific point of view, he gives evidence of his own lack of understanding or of a perfect scientific balance.

Loyalty to tradition means exact knowledge of the divine revelation. It means abiding in Christian truth which marks the path for all uprightness and progress. He who is not on solid ground cannot advance, he must get lost. It is, therefore, imperative that

next to biblical exegesis a patristic theology should flourish. This would enrich the student with all the light inherent to the deposit of Catholic doctrine.

The levity of a careless builder does not spell progress. It is not progress to make intemperate assertions that have not been scientifically checked. And yet, these assertions are swallowed as oracles of modern science. Let it be authentic science and true Catholic teaching and harmony will not fail, and the progress will be real.

Any person with a strong and well-balanced mind entering the Vatican Library to see the wonderful scientific monographs, published in the last few years by our major Catholic Universities, if he does not stop at the dry speculation but ascend to the contemplation of truth, will certainly experience one of those intellectual satisfactions that are without equal in this world. One will admire the serene and noble soaring of great minds which, amidst the difficulties of learning and the obscurity of opinions, know how to distinguish between light and darkness, between doubts and certitude, and are able to discover a new heaven that had been left unexplored in the vast sea of reality. And they can tell you in a language that is both clear and modest all that may have been discovered by them, without fear of sound criticism, but ever grateful to the Lord when they have succeeded in flashing a new ray of light throughout the skies of knowledge.

However, great minds are rare things, and our world is not always peopled by giants. Nevertheless, the modest work of many a scholar may have been of greater practical value to mankind than the much praised achievements of great minds. At any rate, it is a great satisfaction to behold the majestic stream of intellectual light that Revelation has opened to the world. Were it not for an infallible Teacher who is there to prevent all the counterfeits of that revealed light, we poor mortals would end up by turning into darkness that very stream of divine light.

Let us then remember that it is human to err and that obstinacy alone is bad. It is interesting to notice how the wise man corrects himself even before the learned one does, and the learned before the common man. The readiness in correcting oneself is then in proportion to the nobility and excellence of one's mind.

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