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A JEALOUS LOVER

THE Dominican motto 'Veritas' implies, as we have already suggested, an intolerance of error, and for that reason Dominicans have found themselves, often against their wills, in charge of the Inquisition. This is only one small instance in history of the terrifying brilliance of Truth itself which of its nature pierces all darkness and overcomes all shadows. Ever since God first spoke the word of truth into the empty vastness of naught, when the world found its beginning, a certain fear of Truth, a fear of the Word of God, has covered the ways of man. It is to be seen most evidently in the Old Testament when truth defied was so often avenged by terrible slaughter. It is seen when Pilate is confronted with Truth, tries to evade his piercing gaze with a question, and delivers him to what he thought was convenient obliteration. It is still seen in the fear of the Catholic Church and the recurrent persecutions to which she is consequently subjected.

It would, however, profit those who fear the Word of God and who fear the implacable statement of that Word by any authority to reflect that it is not merely the cold word of justice. The world is not a materialised idea emanating from the mind of God like a kind of mechanical toy which must work as he thinks or be smashed to

less than atoms. There is of course an absolute equality between the mind of man and its object, and in reverse order between the whole thing and the mind of God, without which equality there can be no truth. There is no possibility of compromise here; and with revealed truth coming from the one divine Word of God there is no other alternative but to be submitted to it, to be given this equality, or to be cast out into the exterior darkness. Yet this Word is the Word of a Lover. The universe itself is an expression as much of the will of God as of his mind. There are no departments in the divine operation. What he makes he makes with his will *in Verbo*, and his will is a will of love. From the first moment of created being therefore every true thing, true to its character, true to the way God had made it, called forth love in the beholder. The Word became flesh in order to show this; the Word was a living word of love; I am the Truth *and* the Life.

Applying the metaphysics of this expression of divine knowledge, we can see that no single being is in itself, as a being, outside the object of love. It is true; therefore it is good and lovable. This means that Truth may be found in all sorts of odd places and that wherever it is found it is to be cherished, for it is the precious product and object of the divine mind and will. The evil of falsity, like every other evil, is principally a negation, a twist away from the positive affirmation of what is. The eye of God's love is constantly upon the being of things, all of which thus participate in eternal truth; but the errors are an attempt to escape from that glance. For this reason every individual human being, however misguided or even malicious he may be, possesses many precious fragments of truth, though he may hold them as so many pieces of a shattered wine glass, unable to fit them together and make use of them. God makes him, and the truth that he knows and the good desires that stir his soul; so he and his ideas and desires are loved.

Our Lord, the Word Incarnate, often in his parables and elsewhere insists that evil and error should be allowed to coexist with truth until the day of reckoning, lest the true grain of truth be destroyed because it could not be disentangled from the evil weeds surrounding it. He says, too, of those men who cast out devils in his name though they were not his disciples, that he who is not against him must be for him. What could be more tolerant? The Word breathing forth love is raised up on the cross to draw all things to himself lest an atom of truth be left to waste and rot. And the Church, living the life of the Word on earth, remains equally tolerant, loving each individual son of Adam with the same intense love, wishing not to destroy but to fulfil, to fructify the odd seeds of truth to be found in every cult and in every human being. She will not admit, even,

that the works of an evil man are all evil. The criminal possesses natural virtues; his love for his children is a good thing. The Church condemns the idolatrous worship of the false religion, but she cherishes the good desires of the worshippers. That is why she has always used what was harmless (and therefore in itself good and true) in the pagan rites of those she draws into her unity. Sometimes, too, when condemnation would drive man further from her embrace, and when condemnation is not demanded, she will remain silent in face of error and falsity waiting for the time when the grain of truth and good-will will come to the surface. History, if it be read without prejudice, will show innumerable occasions when the Church was tolerant, patient and silent; for she is dedicated to the love of the men she has been formed to save, and she fosters truth wherever she finds it.

Yet the very intensity of the love of the Word calls forth an intense hatred of the evil and error itself, which holds men back from that embrace *in Verbo*. Love of the sinner, St Augustine counselled his followers, must be combined with hatred of his sin. Hatred is not here a term of rhetoric but an expression of the true vehemence of the lover in view of the enemy of his love. The Church, if it is filled with the spirit of the Word, will emphatically abominate the institutions and permanent organisations which are made to deflect man from his true end. For the error is most often to be found in the organisation itself in the religion which is twisted; not founded on the rock of obedience it is so constituted as to deflect men's wills and minds from reality. The members of these false religions are for the most part good, actuated by holy desires and performing many good works. And they are indeed beloved by the Word who makes them in truth. But the organisation in which they are mis-directed, which holds them through custom and upbringing, must in itself appear as abhorrent. Those things which in a fixed and well-grounded framework direct man away from the truth, not the souls of men which are always a moving mixture of good and evil, are the object of the Mother Church's loving intolerance. That is why the written word is censored with so much greater diligence than the spoken word. The Church is more ready to condemn the doctrine set forth in Jansenius's books than Jansenius himself. The Index of prohibited books needs no apology on this score.

We may add here that the indifference of those who do not care to what Church a man belongs while he remains sincere, is a sign of the absence not only of the word of truth but also of the will of love. Where no hatred of sin and error exists there no true love of the sinners can be found.

So, too, the love which springs from truth will be vehemently

opposed to those twisted principles of human action which lead men to move away from truth—and this is irrespective of whether men act on those principles in good faith or not. The modern evil principles of so-called ‘marriage’ are necessarily abhorrent to the custodian of revealed truth wherein Christian marriage plays its important role. And the evil principles of education, of economics and of social behaviour in general which are the modern offshoots of materialism and rationalism cannot be in themselves tolerated. Consequently the Church cannot be neutralised and placed in a department concerned only with another life; she comes forcibly into the present and will often be compelled to interfere in politics, where politics spring from false moral principles.

Again these principles in the concrete human individual’s life and practice are so mingled with good intention and natural morality—even with a morality directly inspired by the Gospels—that the love of the person will breed a great gentleness and perhaps a prolonged silence on the part of Mother Church. Without hypocrisy, without infringing the rights of truth, the Word of God will often remain silent waiting for the day of reckoning when the cockle can be thrashed away from the wheat without damaging the latter. There can be no compromise but there must be ever present an overwhelming charity.

The jealous love of God is inevitably reflected in his Church, his living body on earth. The binding embrace of the threefold unity of divinity when it extends into creation will be always crushing disharmony, suffocating every breath which is not the breath of truth. But this drawing of all the elements of truth and goodness into the oneness of divine purpose is not carried out by human means. The jealousy is a divine jealousy. Even when the Church uses military terms—soldier of Christ, breastplate of charity, helmet of salvation—they are mere figures of a divine battle against spirits and powers of evil, against organisations and principles, which are nothing concrete in themselves, but which are concrete only in deforming man. No human instrument, no fire or battle axe can defeat those evils. It is the power only of the divine love breathed forth from the Word, as, raised upon the height of Calvary, he draws all things to him.

THE EDITOR