

## THE LIFE OF FAITH<sup>1</sup>

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**T**O any believer in God it may be taken as a truism that all existing things are as he, the Creator, made them. There is a permanent and vital link between all created beings and the divine intelligence and will—which is only another way of saying that God is the first and universal cause. Nothing which exists escapes the divine causality. As the philosophers know, first among the causes is the final cause; the end in view decides the course of action. God in creating had an end or purpose. Every creature exists for a purpose and this purpose is achieved by the attainment of its end, by the realization in each individual of his own nature.

This is true in a special way with regard to human nature. The end for which human nature exists is the knowledge and the love of God. Hence there is an ordering of human beings to God as to their final end. St Thomas speaks of this as a contemplation of divine things: '*aliqua contemplatio divinorum*', and sees it as the natural perfection of human intelligence.

### I

Were mankind committed to this order, the order of human nature and the natural knowledge of God, there would be no question of the life of faith. But man has been translated from the order of his own nature to a new order by which he is made, in St Peter's words, a sharer in the divine nature. He is lifted into a new order of being which is so much above his own nature that it is a super-nature, and the order in which this activity takes place is known to us as the super-natural order.

This is the order of grace in which we are favoured by God—by which we are in a state of grace.

The state of grace is not merely the absence of mortal sin. There are people who consider the soul to be in itself a very beautiful

<sup>1</sup> The substance of a paper given at Pax Romana Congress, Nottingham, August 1955.

thing; a spirit glorious in its natural qualities, far more beautiful than any material object—as indeed it is. Mortal sin, they suggest, can defile this soul and make it hideous. If there is no such sin, it remains resplendent in all the glory of its spiritual nature. This seems to be what they mean when they speak of the soul in the state of grace. This conception is, of course, completely inadequate. The state of grace is far from being something merely negative.

We must be equally careful if we are not to find ourselves thinking Protestant thoughts about the state of grace—imagining that God's favour or grace, God's love of us, has no effect radically upon the soul. To the Protestant in Luther's tradition, God loves the soul of the sinner who is justified even though radically that soul still remains hateful. According to this teaching our souls remain hideous in themselves but God covers them over with the merits of Christ as with a mantle, so that these merits of Christ are looked upon as being ours; our sins are not 'imputed to us' but the merits of Christ are. This is the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The more you think of it the more you see that it is an insult to the divine intelligence. It makes God carry through a peculiar pretence and, in fact, act a lie.

The Catholic tradition concerning grace teaches us that God loves human creatures in a special way and in doing so he makes them actually lovable. To be in a state of grace is to be in God's favour in a special way—and that means to be loved by God in a special way. When God loves us in this special way he does not undergo a new experience—that would be impossible to the divine nature. God does not regard the human soul and see that it is lovable. He does something far more radical. In loving the soul in this special way he makes it lovable. And the only thing which is truly lovable to God is something of himself. Hence St Thomas speaks of the love of God creating the goodness in the thing which it loves—*amor Dei infundens et creans bonitatem in rebus*.<sup>2</sup>

This is the only way in which God can love a creature—by making lovable that which he loves. Père Mulard puts it as follows:

'Dieu, acte pur, ne subit pas. Il n'est jamais passif, en quelque façon que ce soit. Donc l'amour en lui n'est pas provoqué,

<sup>2</sup> *Q.D. de Veritate*, q. 28, art. 2, ad 6.

comme en nous, par la rencontre d'un bien aimable; mais c'est lui qui crée le bien aimable parce qu'il l'aime. Son amour est premier par rapport à l'objet et réalise ce qu'il aime. Dès lors, la grâce de Dieu étant une bienveillance, ou un amour de Dieu à notre égard, cet amour crée en nous une réalité et, comme il s'agit d'un amour dans l'ordre surnaturel, il crée en nous une réalité surnaturelle.<sup>3</sup>

The love of God *creates* in us a supernatural reality.

For this purpose God creates a new reality in the soul—a permanent quality which inheres in the soul and becomes the permanent principle of those actions which will have this characteristic that they are directed to eternal life. Father D'Arcy sums it up in a passage in his book, *The Nature of Belief*, which reads as follows:

'To give a complete account of the meaning of "supernatural" is impossible within a short compass. A rough idea, however, may be gathered by the consideration of the different orders of reality. The life of a fox-terrier is higher than that of a foxglove, and the life of a man is in turn above that of a dog. Let us suppose that a dog were for several hours of the day allowed to live the life of a human; it would then be exerting powers which were above the capacity of its nature. Now in fact what we mean by the supernatural is that human beings can receive from God a power (or, better, a quality) which makes them sharers in what is so much higher than themselves as to be justly called divine. If it may be said without irreverence, they are made so perfect that they can enjoy the intimacy and insight of the domestic life of the Holy Trinity, as analogously the fox-terrier might be said to enjoy on an equality the friendship of a human family and share the secrets of the family circle. This new end of life, unspeakable love and union, is the message of good news which is the object of faith. It is by an act of faith, however, that we learn of it and make towards it, and not by vision or experience. The essence, in short, of supernatural faith is that instead of our human pattern and order we are given a divine pattern and swung into a new order.'<sup>4</sup>

It has been revealed to us through Christ that God has raised us above the level of human nature. We have been lifted to a new

<sup>3</sup> *Somme Théologique: La Grace* (Editions de la Revue des Jeunes), p. 265, note 25.

<sup>4</sup> p. 223.

plane and have been given a purpose and destiny bearing no proportion to that which is natural to us. The New Testament gives us a glimpse of what this means when it speaks of man's being born of God, being of the seed of God, being a sharer of the divine nature, promised and possessing eternal life. St John points to the culmination when he says that we shall see God as he is (1 John 3, 2).

St Thomas discussing our elevation to this new plane reminds us that the intelligence is the only faculty in man which takes possession of its object; that the object of knowledge is in some way in the intelligence and that the intelligence of man desires to know first causes and the essences of things. And so he sets out the doctrine of eternal life in the Beatific Vision which consists formally in the intellectual knowledge of the divine essence—*quae consistit in visione Dei per essentiam*.

The uncreated Trinity calls us into the enjoyment of that supreme beatitude which is at the very centre of the triune life; the eternal begetting of the Word by the Father; the eternal breathing forth of the Spirit by the Father and Son—infinite knowledge and infinite love. This is the love by which God loves men in the supernatural order, calling them to the fellowship of his own enjoyment. '*Trahit eos in societatem suae fruitionis*.'

To enter into this fellowship with God, man must be justified from sin and this can be achieved only through faith, and above all in that faith which holds that God justifies man by the mystery of Christ; *quod homo credat Deum esse justificatorem hominum per mysterium Christi*.<sup>6</sup>

## II

Our share in the divine life is not meant to be a passing thing but, in the intention of God, is to be permanent. And so we must be permanently proportioned to the object which is to beatify us—the divine essence in itself. Habitual grace is the fundamental reality of our supernatural life for it is a formal participation in the divine nature. Just as in the natural order our nature does not act immediately but needs the proximate principles of intelligence

<sup>5</sup> *II Sent. Dist. 26, q. 1, art. 1, ad 2.*

<sup>6</sup> *Summa Theol., I-II, 113, 4 ad 3.*

and will, so we should expect to find a similar organism in the order of super-nature. The soul endowed with sanctifying grace does not operate immediately. It is not an immediate principle of action. To be able to act supernaturally it needs proximate permanent principles and these are the infused virtues, especially faith and charity, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

The door to the supernatural is faith. Faith may be considered as an act of the intelligence, moved by the will, accepting the supernatural end offered to man, accepting God and accepting what St Thomas calls 'the mystery of Christ' and all that flows from it in terms of the Christian revelation. Or, in that strange mystery of divine predilection without any merit on the human side, it may be thought of as a quality or habit of the mind inclining it to give assent to God's revelation, infused at the moment of baptism with the new life of sanctifying grace and the other theological virtues of hope and charity: the habit of mind, St Thomas calls it, by which eternal life begins in us *quo inchoatur vita aeterna in nobis*.

This is not the place to attempt an analysis of the act of faith. The theologians all agree, however they may explain its mechanism, that the act of faith is an act of the intelligence, moved by the will, giving assent under the inspiration, and with the aid, of God's grace to the truth of a proposition which God has revealed, not because its intrinsic truth has been perceived by the light of natural reason, but on the authority of God himself as its revealer who can neither deceive nor be deceived.<sup>7</sup>

The mystery of divine vocation to the life of faith is shown to us in the words of Christ: No man cometh to me unless the Father draw him.<sup>8</sup> We must always remember this divine element. But *also* we need to keep in mind human responsibility.

I wish to underline only two points. First, there is the duty springing from the virtue of faith, of doing all in our power by prayer and the example of living to help others to this beginning of eternal life. Mr Sherwood Taylor has spoken of the personal contacts which make for conversion and adds: 'what has been and still is required in the world is not more knowledge but better people'. (*Man and Matter*.) The Holy Father has a paragraph full

7 Denz. 1789 (giving the Vatican Council definition of faith). Cf. *Summa Theol.*, II-II 4, 2. For a good account, v. Sheed: *Theology and Sanity*, p. 298.

8 John 6, 44.

of anxiety in the Encyclical *Humani Generis*:

‘It is the same with the Catholic faith’, he writes. ‘It is, sometimes, not without difficulty that a man makes up his mind in favour of its credentials. True, God has provided us with an amazing wealth of external evidence by which the divine origins of the Christian religion can be brought home beyond question, even to the unaided light of reason. But a man may be so blinded by prejudice, so much at the mercy of his passions and his animosity, that he can shake his head and remain unmoved; not only the evidence of external proofs, which is plain to the view, but even the heavenly inspirations which God conveys to our minds, can go for nothing.’

Frank Sheed has pin-pointed our responsibility in this matter in one of those four tests he has suggested by which we may know how far we have really learnt our religion.

‘A Catholic receives the gifts of truth and life that the Church has to give him, through Christ our Lord. Is he in a kind of anguish at the thought that there are others who know nothing of these gifts and are not receiving them? Can he take it quietly, can he go about his business and only occasionally say: “Poor fellows, they are unlucky”? Or is it a matter of anguish that fellow human beings should be starved of the gifts of truth and life that Christ wanted them to have? Is he as much concerned at that fact and conscious that he ought to be doing something about it, as he would be if he heard that fellow creatures lacked bread? If he is not, then it means that bread has a more real value for him than the truth and the Sacraments.’<sup>9</sup>

Is not this, in fact, the starting point of the lay apostolate? And is there not a special responsibility imposed on educated Catholics, especially those in university circles, to be aware of the riches of the faith?

Secondly, we must remember that, through Adam’s sin, men did not lose their supernatural end. What they did lose was the possibility of attaining that end as an inheritance. Since the fall, the attainment of that end, the *vita aeterna*, has become for each man a personal matter which he can gain only by gaining Christ. To each man must come the awareness of God as his final end to which he comes by adherence to Christ.

It is important to recognize this point, so admirably made for

<sup>9</sup> F. J. Sheed: *Are We Really Teaching Religion?*, p. 13.

instance by Chanoine Leclercq in his little book *Faith and Intelligence*.<sup>10</sup>

'The heart of the faith', he says, 'is to be found in adherence to Christ . . . Christian faith derives a special character from the personality of Christ and from the role of Christ in Christianity. Christ is master in two ways, in teaching doctrine and in acting as our model; and he is also the saviour, not only by placing the means of salvation at our disposal, but because this is realized by a special, intimate and personal relationship of his person with ours, an action on us, a union with us. The disciple does not restrict himself to following the teaching and example of Christ; he submits himself to the action of Christ.' And he goes on: 'One cannot repeat too often that Christian faith is concerned first of all with the person of Christ. It consists in adhering to Christ as to a Master, to the "Son of God".'<sup>11</sup>

Dr L. P. Jacks in his autobiography wrote of the numbers of his contemporaries who 'know God only by hearsay'. It is not irrelevant to suggest that many of the difficulties which Catholics meet in the domain of faith arise from lack of personal contact with Christ. They know him 'only by hearsay'. They need a more lively faith. I say emphatically that they need *faith*. The young Catholic scientist may be in real danger if he thinks he can meet the difficulties raised by the agnostics he encounters by having recourse merely to philosophy. Faith is intellectually reputable but it does not depend on philosophical argument. It springs from greater depths. And generally speaking we do not convert others to Christ by argument but by being vital Christians. And yet there is an intellectual duty to the faith. In this connection a question arises which is of concern to Catholic graduates and undergraduates, especially those who are about to leave the university and to embark on the adventure of life.

Can we be satisfied that the theological training which our students and graduates receive is adequate to their needs and to their own potentialities? Many of you here represent the rich tradition of the Catholic universities with their theological faculties and you may perhaps consider such a question an impertinence. In England, I think there can be no doubt that the theological equipment of our Catholic students is woefully deficient.

<sup>10</sup> Clonmore and Reynolds, 1954.

<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 16, 17, 23-24.

Many students from their own zeal and enthusiasm embark on personal courses of reading to supplement their deficiency. Attempts are made in the university chaplaincies to provide a fuller background of knowledge by regular theological conferences, but those who are closest to Catholic life in our universities will agree that, while faith and the love of our Lord are strong, the theological equipment of most Catholic students scarcely rises above an average sixth-form level and cannot compare in depth or maturity with the advances in secular studies which take place during the university years. Many of our teaching orders of nuns suffer from a similar handicap. I wonder, also, to what extent the theological faculties in the Catholic universities throughout the world have in mind the proper equipping of the Catholic layman, and whether they are not too closely confined to providing for the professional needs of students for the priesthood and for our doctors in philosophy and theology who will later grace the rostra of our seminaries and theological faculties. Are our graduates being provided with the philosophical and theological equipment which they need if they are to exercise effectively the apostolate of the Catholic intellectual or the educated Catholic layman? Are they equipped to solve the problems which a Catholic meets in the modern world? In *The Tablet* for August 13, 1955, a remarkable leading article makes with slightly different emphasis this very point:

'Apart from a few brilliant and unique figures, it became very much the fashion for the layman to equate religion with theology, and to leave its cultivation and defence to the professional specialists, just as he left law and medicine to the professionals. He was quite likely to take more interest in learning something about both law and medicine than in learning anything about theology. In fact, of course, the Catholic religion, the life and activity and interests of the Church, could not be comprised under the heading of theology, certainly not of the theology which was taught in the seminaries. Along a whole frontier of interests, political and social and economic, the moral theologian might have something to say, but the actual battle with the unbelievers had to be fought much more in language which the unbeliever understood, and on his ground. A Chateaubriand or a Montalembert might arise unexpectedly and most usefully, with the gift of enabling his generation to look



at the Church in history in a new and illuminating way. But, broadly speaking, these men of literary genius were very few and far between, and there is incredibly little to show for all the generations of the educated and well-to-do Catholics of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, because the great majority of them did not think, and were not particularly encouraged to think, that the defence or the propagation of the Catholic Faith was any business of theirs. It was all left, readily enough, to the Bishops and clergy; and they, for their part, could generally think that it could not be specially their individual duty to neglect more personal and obvious and local obligations in order to engage in the battle for the mind of educated Europe. In that struggle, too many battles were lost in the eighteenth century, and many more were lost, even if some were won, in the nineteenth.'

The twentieth century is more than half over and the tide has now turned. To this generation of Catholic lay apostles there is opened the prospect of resounding victory in the battle for the mind of educated Europe.

It is the duty of the Catholic specialist to think out the relationships between the teaching of the Catholic faith and the conclusions of his own particular subject. Wrong notions concerning the nature of faith and an attempt to base its authority on subjective criteria such as internal experience has led, in the Protestant world, to the practical abandonment of any attempt to test the findings of human science by the criterion of divine revelation.

There are still scientific circles, even today, in which it is taken for granted that the religious problem no longer exists. Religion is thought of as an historical phenomenon, interesting from the point of view of archaeology or folklore but quite incapable of proof and having no intellectual significance. Catholic students facing this attitude can be badly disturbed. They wonder whether the religious teaching of their schooldays was without solid foundation; whether they had been deceived by reasoning which had no foundation. Professor Sugranyes de Franch spoke of a spirit of 'rebellion'. This does not necessarily mean that they lose their faith. But it may foster an irrational sentimental loyalty towards religion while intellectual adherence to the faith is weakened. Religious practice may continue but it is divorced from thought and action. Those who are thus troubled seem to have a

vague fear that there is a contradiction somewhere between the findings of science and the truths of the faith. What they do not grasp, I think, and what experience of life beyond the university may give them, is that science looks for a special type of evidence and gives a special sort of explanation of what goes on within nature, but that there is more than one way of explaining reality.

Let us recall the principle of the unity and integrity of truth. It is a denial of the integrity of truth and the integrity of the human intellect to seek escape in a sort of double knowledge which would preserve the truths of religion in a watertight compartment and would keep equally segregated the findings of human science—by which a man preserves his faith by refusing to think about it.

It is the duty of the senior members in the universities to renounce this attitude and to give a lead in the defence of intellectual integrity. And this question, of course, will be much in your minds during the course of this Congress. It requires attention from the specialists. In each field there are victories to be won. Today I can offer no more than some general comments.

Objections have been made to the intrusion in the human intellectual disciplines or the findings of science, of factors which are extraneous to them, and beyond their control. 'Why', it is said, 'should human research be conditioned in advance by preconceived religious ideas?'

Catholic apologists have replied that in every field of learning preconceived ideas and extraneous elements are taken for granted, and indeed are often a safeguard to the student in pursuit of truth. It has been pointed out, for example, that there is no such thing as pure mathematics, for even the most abstract kind of mathematics requires a minimum of sense knowledge for its definition and postulates. I retail Dr McLaughlin's quip that a mathematician without senses would never make sense. What matters is that truth should be pursued, that the student or the professional, the man of science or the historian, should remain rigidly faithful to the strict scientific method of his subject, but should recognize that the scientific explanation is not necessarily the whole explanation. The teaching of the faith is not an intrusion into these fields of knowledge but is a safeguard, pointing out to the intelligence in pursuit of truth the ways along which truth in that particular field does not lie. The Vatican Council dwelt on the role which the

faith plays in protecting the student from error, and showed that faith and reason far from being in disagreement offer mutual help one to the other, since reason provides proofs of the foundations on which faith is based while faith frees reason from dangers of error.

‘There can never be any real discrepancy’, said the Council, ‘between faith and reason, since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, and God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth. The false appearance of such a contradiction is mainly due, either to the dogmas of faith not having been understood and expounded according to the mind of the Church, or to the inventions of opinion having been taken for the verdicts of reason . . . and not only can faith and reason never be opposed to one another, but they are of mutual aid one to the other.’<sup>12</sup>

Science itself is, of course, severely limited, as the true scientist is the first to admit. It deals with observable facts. It proceeds by observation and experiment. The process may be summed up as observation, hypothesis, inference and verification. This is not, of course, merely inductive reasoning; for the third step, that of inference, lifts the scientist out of his domain of observation and experiment into the domain of philosophy.

‘The idea of truth’, Chanoine Leclercq has rightly said, ‘is not derived from science but guides it. It is derived from a spontaneous mental outlook and reaches precision through a form of reflection inspired by what is known as philosophy. We are here on an entirely different plane from that of scientific research. Scientific research shows where truth is to be found amidst those forms of knowledge which come within the scope of its activity. It presumes that there is an object or a reality corresponding to the idea expressed by the word truth, but it is not in a position to solve or even attempt to solve the problem of what truth is in itself or why men must seek for it.’<sup>13</sup>

Professor Caldin, though in his remarkable book, *The Power and Limits of Science*, he does not discuss the relations of science to revealed religion, has nevertheless given us the right guidance on this point.

‘Our troubles’, he writes, ‘are not fundamentally political; they

<sup>12</sup> Denz. 1797, 1799.

<sup>13</sup> *Faith and Intelligence*, p. 45. cf. Albert Dondeyne, *Truth and Freedom*, pp. 44-5.

are ethical, metaphysical, and ultimately theological. They are concerned with the good life for man, therefore with the nature and destiny of man. This raises problems that cannot, in my view, be solved without deciding whether it is possible for human and divine to meet, whether the gap between man and God can be bridged (as Christians hold it can). . . . We must insist on the accurate discrimination of methods, and refuse to countenance the extrapolation of science beyond its proper limits. We must include ethics and metaphysics in our synthesis of knowledge, and decline to replace them by pseudo-scientific substitutes. We must adopt the higher view of man's potentialities, rather than any of the narrow materialist views, both because it is true and because the consequences of denying it are disastrous. Only then may we hope to work towards a new synthesis, acceptable to a science-conscious era.<sup>14</sup>

When truly scientific research is done, we need have no fears of conflict between the truths of the faith, with their practical conclusions in the moral order, and the findings of science. Let us remember that in his address to the members of the Pontifical Academy of Science in November 1951, the Holy Father showed triumphantly how out of date so many critics of religion are proved to be and how the findings of modern science have vindicated the time-honoured proofs of the existence of God and the creation of the universe.

'By means of exact and detailed research into the large-scale and small-scale worlds', said the Pope, modern science 'has considerably broadened and deepened the empirical foundation on which the argument rests, and from which it concludes to the existence of an *Ens a se*, immutable by his very nature. It has, besides, followed the course and the direction of cosmic developments, and just as it was able to get a glimpse of the final state towards which these developments are inexorably moving, so also has it pointed to their beginning in time some five milliard years ago. Thus, with that concreteness which is characteristic of physical proofs, it has confirmed the contingency of the universe and also the well-founded deduction as to the epoch when the world came forth from the hands of the Creator.'<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Chapman and Hall, 1949, p. 179.

<sup>15</sup> *Modern Science and God*, p. 86.

And since one of the commissions deals with medico-moral problems, I quote one tiny example in this domain by referring to the studies of Dr R. Chapman Cohen and Mr C. M. Wilkinson at the Black Notley Maternity Unit, on the relations of pregnancy and tuberculosis, with the evidence showing that the assumption sometimes made in medical circles that pregnancy in a tuberculous woman should be terminated by abortion, is not justified on medical grounds.<sup>16</sup> Murder is not good medicine.

I may sum up this question of the life of faith as follows: The Catholic is not just a collector of revealed data, as Albert Dondeyne has so well said—someone who goes through the world mechanically repeating the words of Christ and the Apostles. The sparse data of revelation refer to an all-embracing mystery which is called the order of grace and is nothing other than the mystery of God and his redeeming love as rendered manifest by the Word Incarnate and the effusion of the Sanctifying Spirit. Faith is precisely the adherence to this mystery. Accordingly it is the duty of Christians to think and re-think at all times, starting from the partial and converging data of revelation, this synthesizing unity which is the Christian mystery in order to arrive at a better understanding of this mystery itself, its repercussions upon human existence and its meaning for the conduct of man. All this is called theology, which is a work of reason enlightened by faith or, more exactly, a work of faith making use of reason—'*fides quaerens intellectum*', faith which seeks understanding.

### III

I turn from these external considerations to something more subjective and personal. Perhaps these would be better made from a pulpit than from this platform. I might preface these remarks by making a plea for a deeper appreciation of the sacrament of Confirmation as the sacrament of adult life in the Church. It is not here a question of the age at which the sacrament of Confirmation is administered. There might be some psychological and subjective advantage in postponing the reception of the sacrament until the threshold of youth or even the beginning of maturity—but this is a matter of general discipline in the Church. What I am

<sup>16</sup> See Dr Cohen's article in *British Journal of Tuberculosis*, 1946, and 'Tuberculosis and Family Relationships' by C. M. Wilkinson in the *Catholic Medical Quarterly*, October 1947.

concerned with at present is an appreciation and an awareness of the permanent *status* which this sacrament gives to the confirmed person and its special relationship to the lay apostolate, and more particularly to the intellectual apostolate.

I speak of the sacrament of Confirmation mainly because of the character which it confers, but also because through this sacrament an increase in the gifts of the Holy Ghost is given to the soul, and some of these gifts are of immense importance in the proper living of the life of faith.

The theological virtues—faith, hope and charity—are habits infused into the soul at Baptism disposing the intelligence and will to act as human faculties in the supernatural order.

In addition to these virtues the soul receives with sanctifying grace the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, and a great increase in these gifts comes with the sacrament of Confirmation. It is the function of the gifts not to increase the activity of the intelligence and will, but to induce in the soul a certain docility to the divine action. They have been compared, as you know, to the sails of a ship set to receive the impulse of the wind and so give added motion to the vessel beyond that which the efforts of the rowers could attain. The virtues are the oars of our supernatural craft; the gifts are its sails. Of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, four are concerned with the intelligence and, therefore, with the virtue of faith. They are understanding, wisdom, knowledge and counsel. St Thomas relates each of these four gifts to the virtue of faith.

The truths of faith proposed for our belief should be seized upon and penetrated by the intelligence—and the more gifted the intelligence the deeper should be this penetration. (Our concern, let me emphasize, is not with argument concerning the truths of revelation, which is the domain of theology, but with a deeper awareness of the content of this revelation.) Facility to do this is offered to us by the gift of *understanding*.

We have also a duty with regard to revelation to make right judgments so that the intelligence is aware of the truths which it should hold and those which it should not hold. With regard to divine things, this judgment is guided by the gift of *wisdom*; in relation to created things, it is guided by the gift of *knowledge*; and for each particular application, in practice, it is guided by the gift of *counsel*.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> cf. *Summa Theol.*, II-II, 8, 6.

I do not propose to say anything here about the gift of wisdom which leads to the penetration of divine truth by experience and is the gateway to the mystical life. It has been called 'the science of the saints'. Nor do I propose to discuss the gift of counsel which is concerned with detailed specific questions. I should prefer to say something about the more general gifts of understanding and knowledge.

The gift of understanding leads to the perfection of faith. The act of faith is an act of the intelligence assenting to a truth on the authority of God revealing. The gift of understanding allows the mind to penetrate intuitively the terms of the truth proposed to the intelligence. It illuminates the mind by what the theologians call 'an interior realization' of that truth.

'There is a difference', a great theologian has written, 'between assent by belief and assent by penetration and experience. One who believes adheres to the testimony which has been offered and his action is restricted to assent, for he neither seeks nor probes further. Understanding, however, penetrates to the core, investigates the hidden reaches of the thing, extending even to its antecedents. It strives to lift the veil and to illuminate the darkness. Through the gift of understanding, God dispels the mists.'<sup>18</sup>

If it is important that science should be confined to its own domain, it is no less important at the present day that these mists should be dispelled and that Catholics prominent in intellectual life and in university circles should have that clarity in their awareness of the faith which is produced by the gift of understanding.

The gift of knowledge, too, has a peculiar importance. To seize the truth, to be penetrated with it, is a product of the gift of understanding. The right judgment about the truth, distinguishing what should be believed from what should not be believed, comes from the gift of knowledge. Knowledge does two things. It gives an awareness of the reality of the truths of the faith and their application to ourselves. It also helps a man to know not only what he should believe but to know also how to manifest his faith to others, how to lead others to the faith and to refute those who

<sup>18</sup> John of St Thomas, *The Gifts of the Holy Ghost*, English translation (Sheed & Ward, 1950), p. 101.

deny it.<sup>19</sup> The harmony of all truth is made clear to the mind by the gift of knowledge. This, it seems to me, is peculiarly the gift of the Holy Ghost which the university Catholic should desire. The gift of knowledge harmonises natural and revealed truth. With it comes serenity in possession of truth.

Here surely is sufficient reason why we in this assembly, and educated Catholics generally, should be aware of the richness of these gifts of the Holy Ghost, should pray for their increase and should be attuned to their reception.

I conclude by reminding you that there is a way in which the gifts of the Holy Ghost are reflected in the Beatitudes and in which the Beatitudes indicate a certain preparation for the gifts. I shall speak only of the gift of understanding which St Thomas relates to cleanness of heart. *Beati mundo corde, quia ipsi Deum videbunt.* This is true in a twofold way. It is manifest in the first place, I think, with the cleanness of heart which is enshrined in the virtue of purity and which is a fruit of moral self-discipline. Self-control in chastity is a necessary disposition for those who give themselves to the intellectual life in the pursuit of truth both natural and supernatural. The clean of heart see God. But there is another cleanness of heart in the intelligence which is a preparation for the gift of understanding. It is a cleansing of the mind from error and also from sensible images and the domination of imagination. It is the discipline of high thinking. We can apply to the follower of this discipline the words of the poet about scorning delight and living laborious days.

Perhaps the most important duty which the Catholic intellectual owes to his faith is this cleansing, this purgation, this catharsis, which presupposes a mental discipline not easy to attain, closely related, I think, to the contemplation of divine things, and a prelude to the final vision. The attainment of it does not depend entirely on our own efforts. It comes as a gift from God. There is another side to this picture which a modern writer has put in poetic form, drawing together the notions of this purification of men, the cleansing work of Calvary and the maternal protection of Mary the Mother of Sorrows, holding her Son's dead body at the foot of the Cross on Golgotha. I quote for you *Pietà* by David Gascoyne.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Summa Theol.*, II-II, 9, 1.

<sup>20</sup> From *Poems of Our Time 1900-1942*, chosen by Richard Church and Mildred Bozman. Everyman's Library (J. M. Dent & Sons.).



Stark in the pasture on the skull-shaped hill,  
In swollen aura of disaster shrunken and  
Unsheltered by the ruin of the sky,  
Intensely concentrated in themselves the banded  
Saints abandoned kneel.

And under the unburdened tree  
Great in their midst, the rigid folds  
Of a blue cloak upholding as a text  
Her grief-scrawled face for the ensuing world to read,  
The Mother, whose dead Son's dear head  
Weighs like a precious blood-encrusted stone  
On her unfathomable breast:  
Holds Him God has forsaken, Word made flesh  
Made ransom, to the slow smoulder of her heart  
Till the catharsis of the race shall be complete.

'Till the catharsis of the race shall be complete.' That will come only with the fulfilment of the mystery of Christ and with the intuitive vision of God. When that happens the life of faith will have reached its term. Until that time we have a great work to do—to live the faith to the full, to spread it to the utmost of our power—to win the victory in the battle for the mind of educated Europe and the world.