

'WEAPONS MIGHTY TO GOD'

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty to God, unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels. And every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God: and bringing unto captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ. And having in readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be fulfilled.—2 COR. 10, 3-6.

THERE seem to be so many vital problems in the world of today, which cry out for a solution. There is so much moral and physical suffering everywhere, that people of good will often cannot discern where lies the greatest need of bringing relief. It may perhaps be a consolation to those who, by the goodness of God, possess the Catholic faith, to understand more clearly the powerful aid that their life, lived truly on a supernatural plane, can render to mankind. For St Paul, in the text quoted, is writing to ordinary Christians, expounding in most powerful terms the tremendous force of our spiritual weapons. His words are equally applicable today and seem to suggest that our problems are truly only solved in God, by our complete submission to him. We need, then, to examine more closely these 'divinely powerful weapons' (2 Cor. 10. Knox). We must rekindle the enthusiasm of that great Apostle and yield ourselves more generously to the supernatural life to which we are being urged. Indeed, there are already some persons, the contemplative religious, who are wholly dedicated to such a life. So great is its power that, far from shutting themselves away from the world and its suffering, they are found to be fighters in the front line: 'wrestling . . . not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places' (Eph. 7, 12).

These weapons, then, that we wield are the theological virtues, which are 'mighty to God' because they are supernatural, having God as their object. It is in the first place essentially the life of faith which is an assertion of the supreme importance of spiritual

values and the things of God in a materialistic age. This theological virtue, as St Thomas says, 'implies assent of the intellect to that which is believed'. The object of faith is primarily the First Truth and secondly matters connected with that Truth. A living faith informed by charity recognizes the First Truth as God, the Creator. But this Creator is also the Father who has so loved the world as to cause its redemption by the Incarnation, Passion and death of his only-begotten Son. This truth is so vital that the contemplative surrenders his whole life to God by a profession of vows which bind him in union with his Redeemer, to his Creator, until death. He has become so fascinated by the Truth, the very Person of Christ, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, that he seeks to become more and more identified with him. So this work of faith and contemplation is a mighty spiritual weapon raised against atheism, the utter denial of God, or a lofty intellectual pride which refuses to submit to the teaching authority of the Church, and hence to God. Such pride of intellect St Paul vividly describes as 'every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God'. Only the humility in a life of faith, a life wholly directed towards God and which is 'doing the truth in charity', can break down these heights of spiritual pride and obtain from God graces of conversion. 'Stand fast, your loins girt with truth, the breastplate of justice fitted on and your feet shod in readiness to publish the gospel of peace. With all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fire-tipped armour of your wicked enemy; make the helmet of salvation your own and the sword of the spirit, God's word. Use every kind of prayer and supplication.' (Eph. 6, 14-18. Knox.)

But this theological virtue of faith must be united to those other 'divinely powerful' weapons of hope and charity. 'You must wear all the weapons in God's armoury, if you would find strength to resist the cunning of the devil.' (Eph. 6, 11. Knox.)

It is love which we must exercise the whole time, in all our daily relationship with others, for such charity is strong 'unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels' (2 Cor. 10). All the interior barriers of self-centred love should crumble before the demands of fraternal charity. Especially where there are souls separated by God to be his own possession in a religious community, there is no place for petty divisions, separations or

jealousies. Thus the contemplatives, being purified of all selfishness, strive to become pure vessels of love, channels through which the superabundant riches of grace and divine life are poured out upon others. When love reigns supreme it radiates upon the world outside 'ready to pull down strongholds' (2 Cor. 10. Knox), able to pierce through barriers which separate nation from nation, and race from race. Love is a penetrating force, a mighty unifying power, which reaches the very heart, destroying human counsels of revenge and aggression. It has always been the true sign of a follower of Christ, whose last prayer and actions upon earth had expressed his ardent desire for unity, in love. It is significant that St Thomas (*Commentary in Joannem*, 13, 35) describes this fellowship of charity in almost military terms, since love makes us members of the army of Christ. 'We should remember that the man who is numbered among the soldiers of any king must carry his insignia. Now the insignia of Christ are the insignia of charity. So whoever wishes to be numbered among the soldiers of Christ must be signed with the character of charity.'

Closely linked with the theological virtue of charity is that of hope, which reaches out to the power and mercy of God. So many people everywhere today are secretly crushed by fear of the evils which threaten the world by the use of atomic warfare. There are few who have not experienced a cold horror and dread of the far-reaching destructive force of a hydrogen bomb. But against this we must assert our supernatural hope and learn to lean upon the help of an all-powerful, all-merciful Father, who only wills what is best for mankind. This work of trust in the power of God and in the infinite merits of Christ is a work of spiritual infiltration. Especially is this true of the contemplative religious, who form a kind of sixth column, a fitting reparation for the insidious fifth column, by their life dedicated to prayer and sacrifice. By their daily share in the Mass, they plead for the mercy of God upon the world they have left. 'Great statesmen believe that the way to govern is to know how to use force opportunely. For us our great resource is to get within this universal misery in the world and to try, by countless good deeds, to fill up this chasm. Those who are merciful attain, even in supernatural things, results which violence cannot. To have sympathetic words, to be good, good again, and always good, is the means of reigning over hearts. It is the most penetrating political strategy. If it is

necessary to exclude violence, we must not for all that neglect authority: brotherly correction is counted among the works of mercy. But ordinarily it is by gentleness, the good things proceeding from a sympathetic heart, that we shall have entry into other people's hearts . . . when the heart is gained all the rest comes.' (Père Gardeil, O.P.).

Finally, St Paul seems to sum up the activity of these theological virtues in an act of obedience. Upon that first surrender to Truth which is an obedience of the mind follows submission of the will to God. In opposition to that 'excessive pride which sets itself up against the true knowledge of God' (2 Cor. 10. Knox) we strive to live in humility, the most fundamental attitude of the creature before its Creator, and in obedience, which is the trustful surrender of a soul to its God. It was in the first place by disobedience that Adam fell from grace. Our redemption was wrought by the perfect, loving obedience and sacrifice of our Lord. It is particularly in this virtue that we are supported and encouraged by the example of contemplative religious who express the offering of their whole life to God by vowing obedience until death. As St Thomas says, it is the 'chief of all religious vows' . . . and . . . 'extends to those acts which are closely connected with the end of religion'. By this surrender of their will, these religious are expressing the submission of all their fellow Catholics in the world. So obedience restores daily to Almighty God something of the homage due to him. As it is lived from day to day in the willing humility of a creature wholly dependent on God, it becomes a continuation of the obedience of Christ, into whose all-powerful supplication our own prayer is absorbed. This great movement in obedience towards God of those who believe is so powerful that it purposes to include all other souls, 'bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ', drawing all souls to the Truth so that they too may be possessed by God. Only when this obedience is fulfilled, only when all minds are enlightened in the Word and all wills subjected through Christ to God, may he in his justice tempered by infinite mercy revenge and bring to nought all disobedience.

So we are inspired by the words of St Paul to discover the solution of our problems, not in ourselves but in God, and in our moving out towards him through the theological virtues, in obedience. 'For though we live in the flesh, we are not engaged

in a carnal warfare. For the weapons of our campaigning are not carnal, but they are mighty enough by divine appointment for the destruction of fortresses and we overturn human reasonings and every form of high-mindedness exalting itself against the knowledge of God, and we bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of the Christ. And we are prepared to punish every disobedience, as soon as your own obedience is thorough.' (Fr Spencer, O.P. Trans. 2 Cor. 10.)



GREEK AND JEW

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IN the last few centuries before the coming of Christ the Greek influence began to make itself felt. It reached Judea through Egypt where there was a great number of Jews centred round Alexandria. But there was also a direct influx of the non-sacramental hellenic view of religion from the cities which Alexander himself founded in Palestine. The Jews were introduced to the families of the gods, and the Machabees revolted against this attack on their allegiance to Jahwe, for the hellenic familiarity with the gods naturally offered its attractions. But it was not from the Greek myths that the greatest influence was felt. These were rejected. But the intellectualization of Greek philosophy was spreading all over the near East, and it was this that was wedded to Jewish thought in the Wisdom literature. There was no wavering about the transcendence and uniqueness of Jahwe; the Jewish faith and outlook remained untouched yet the Greek influence emphasized the 'interior' aspect of their religion and gave a new approach to Jahwe as the God of Creation. Man was seen still as a part of that divinely organized world, but in the Wisdom literature he views the organization and orderliness of it all and he is less bound up in its inevitable functioning by means of the ritual of sacrifice, and more directed towards the contemplation of God's working in nature—more of the beholder and