

Co. LIMITED
p.m. Saturday
July

The True Witness



Vol. 11 No. 1
The Senate
Jan 1 1908

MONTREAL, THURSDAY, JULY 11, 1907

PRICE FIVE CENTS

The Progress of Thought and the Catholic Faith.

(Continued from Last Week.)

In the monumental work which he has bequeathed to posterity, the "Summa Theologiae," St. Thomas reasons wherever it is possible from actual experience and observation. He at least cannot be blamed if his experimental data were meagre. They were as good for his purpose, to all practical intent, as the most modern of modern investigations, and from them he reasoned in the light of the great metaphysical principles to conclusions that will weather all the stress and strain of time. Until the mind of man changes, and that is to say, until man ceases to be man, the "Summa Theologiae" will prove to be the norm of theological thought. Its principles are the perennial guiding principles of reason. It enshrines the truest philosophy and it embodies the most perfect scientific method.

In such a spirit, as I have said, the true theologian approaches the task of reconciliation. In such a spirit, too, the true man of science—and by far the majority of eminent scientific men have, as a fact, been, and are, men of this stamp—envisages the multifarious problems set him by nature. Not, indeed, that it lies in his province to concord his discoveries and the inferences correctly or incorrectly drawn from them with the teaching of the Church—for to science has not been accorded the guardianship of all truth—but rather because, interested as he naturally may be in revelation, he at least has no previous bias in favor of one apparent scientific truth rather than another, and, having none, he leaves revelation, which is not his subject, untouched in order that he can work out to their conclusions the actual problems which he finds before him.

It will be found as an almost invariable rule that the great men of science have not themselves been responsible for the difficulties of reconciliation that prompt, in the first instance, the desire of a dogmatic restatement. Some, no doubt, may be found who have added philosophizing to investigations and speculative to the exacter and more mathematical treatment of their subject. But, for the most part, the popularizers of scientific results, the small philosophers of new discoveries, are to blame for the apparent contradictions and difficulties that so make themselves felt. For in no case can any result of any exact science transcend the matter and material measurements with which all science deals. To be exact science must be experimental and observational; it must be formulated mathematically. And if the formulae of one department of science to be found as in several instances they have been found, to hold good in others, they are none the less formulas expressing the relations of mass, measurement or distance and time. Even in the science of chemistry, in which time is neglected and space only beginning to enter into the calculations, the proportional masses of bodies fixes the fundamental concept.

Consequently it is fairly obvious that it does not belong to exact science, so long as it remains exact, to probe into the real questions which are so familiar in theology. And if, leaving the spatial, temporal and material conditions which are its guarantee of experimental accuracy, science attempts to formulate for itself a system of realities, it has then and there ceased to be science and is philosophy. And, moreover, it has no cogent scientific proof whatever to offer for the validity of its new speculations. Such speculations, at any rate, could never rightly lay claim to a scientific continuity, though, in a sense, they might point to an obscurely scientific origin.

This is a point which is often forgotten or lost sight of. It is so easy, so alluring, so entirely human, to speculate; so extraordinarily difficult to practice the abnegation of methodical exactness. The separating science from philosophy is so thoughtlessly crossed and recrossed, that it is, always with greatest veneration and respect that we ought to look upon those geniuses of science who resolutely refused to leave the noble lowliness of pure investigation for the alluring, but sometimes perilous, heights of imagination unfettered by the yoke that sober fact imposes.

On the other hand, such a well-guarded veneration should put us on our guard against those who, while professing to tread steadily in the paths of science, in reality beguile us with a pseudo-scientific philosophy. For to these latter knowledge is not so much growing in detailed extent as changing in nature. Old established principles of thought are breaking down that new forms may take their place. Venerable arguments are being set aside as not fitted to the requirements of the modern mind. It may be that a more relative value is given to the new forms of thought, but, if it is in the same breath, all absolute

values are swept away; and the principles by which human reason is governed—and we must concede human reason as it actually is, not as it might or ought to be—being catalogued as relative, are rendered absolutely worthless. But if they are wrong, these scientific-philosophers, leaving their microscopes and their balances, their test-tubes and their calculus, and filling up the gaps in their data by creations of their own fertile minds, logically enough evolved there, no doubt, if the principles they seek to establish be granted beforehand; if they turn from their measures and retorts to a theoretical construction of matter, which may represent fact as it does spatially picture it, but which undoubtedly leaves the only real point of the problem to be solved without even the ghost of a solution; if they are wrong in this, then the theologians have no need to adapt their teaching to new principles or theories, but only to explain and unfold the old dogmatic truths upon the old lines in the light of modern exact research, discovery and statement.

As an example of the explanation rather than adaptation which is urged, the treatment due to-day to almost any theological term would suffice. Consider, for example, the word person, and its meaning. Has exact science in any sense caused the conception expressed by this word to shift? It is not here a question of the etymological changes accompanying and denoting the growth of language. When we employ the word, even in this twentieth century, we know perfectly well that we do not mean a masked actor; and if any doubt exists as to what is the precise signification—the full extent and content—of the word, the old philosophical definition, fitting the root thought congenial to our minds, will easily banish it.

Has, then, modern science discredited in its researches that we, who are persons, are anything else than "individual substances of a rational nature?" Doubtless we should be assailed with a storm of criticism for such an exact definition. Atomistic philosophy and upholders of the broader theory of evolution would come to the attack armed with hypothesis and theory. We should be told that there is no such thing as substance in the sense in which we employ the term; that an individual is the aggregate result of as many individuals as there are atoms in his composition; that the rational nature is the outcome of the irrational, and that, were our record of nature perfect we should find included in it an infinity of variations and degrees of rationality.

But it is certainly worthy of notice that not one such criticism—if we except, perhaps, the second—comes from a scientist speaking formally as a man of science. If you will, but of scientists speaking as philosophers, indulging in speculations, imagining realities and freed from all the tests of scientific exactness. And with these Catholic theologians are familiar, with the familiarity of long acquaintance gained by several thousand years of recrudescence here.

Is it necessary, then, to accommodate dogmatic teaching to the narrowness of pseudo-scientific philosophy? Would there be any real gain in translating our terms, supposing that such a proceeding were feasible, into their equivalents in these self-confessedly relative schools? If we wished to present the truths of dogma in an easier form to the world there would undoubtedly be such a gain, in the one supposition that these schools of philosophy had caught the public ear and at the same time were radically true or at least not radically false and incapable of correction. But since it is impossible to suppose that the scholastic doctrine, say, of matter and form, is in any real sense translatable into the chemical-philosophical theory of physical atoms, plus their shape and position in space, and minus a substantial reality in determining the resultant before attempting to make so radical a change in a terminology that has crystallized around the root theological ideas and been consecrated by an immemorial service, it would be pertinent first of all to examine as to which of the two theories claims with the better right our allegiance.

It might be easy—to continue the use of the term person as our example—to suppose that we were a matter of fact, no more than aggregates of uniformly similar atoms in a perpetual state of violent vibration, kept in order and thus relatively in place by some such principle as the soul. And this would doubtless hold good, when adjusted for all material beings. They would—we would—be as it were porous; and omitting any mention of the undoubted difficulty of one formal principle extending itself to separated individual atoms, the aggregate of particles, existing as such because of the soul, would take the place of what scholastics know as *materia prima*. But the modern philosophical atomists would have us consider the consistent atoms as already of themselves matter of a definite kind, necessitating our labelling them substances. In this event we should be as far from reconciliation as ever; for we should be obliged to look upon the human person as an accidental, rather than as a substantial, unity.

It is quite obvious that whichever view of these two is to be translated into the terminology of the other must undergo an extraordinarily labored accommodation. No matter to what extent the molecular particles be theoretically attenuated, they can never cease to be of a definite material nature, possessing definite material qualities and constituting in their aggregation a definite mass. From the various activities of the resultant being certain structural, physical, chemical, biological and internal alterations can be inferred; and, it is conceivable, could be written down in the symbolism of atomic formulae with an almost surprising degree of mathematical exactness. It is likewise obvious that this view leaves altogether out of account the question of the possibility of spiritual natures, since it is un-specific terminology. More than this; it is unable to explain or refer to any of its own formulae the immaterial functions which are manifested and acknowledged in the case of man. The crudities of those who would refer to thought as a secretive product of organic tissues will never be taken seriously by the thoughtful, much though it might be desirable to include many, and indeed all, processes physical and psychical alike, in a single algebraic concept. The mind is confronted here with a consideration which does not have reference to degrees of organicity but to real diversity of principle; and, though we may well adopt everything that exact science has had to tell us in the past and be prepared to listen with respect to all that it may teach us in the future, we should do well to pause before admitting too readily the extraordinarily far-reaching conclusions that are not seldom built upon its exact, though meagre, data. It is well to remember that Cavendish, who first separated the constituents of water; Liebig, whose laboratory at Giessen was perhaps the most fertile of all in results; and Michael Faraday did not admit any possible existence of physical atoms. For the same reason, Sir Humphrey Davy used the word "preparation," and Dr. Wollaston "equivalent," in place of that which has now come into general use. Sir William Ramsay warns us that "we must beware of confusing this (the atomic) theory with the facts on which it is founded." Indeed, though in the preparation of mere text-books of chemistry or physics we should hardly be led to expect any very deep philosophical considerations set before the student, there are books in which some reference is made to the fact that a physical atom, in the strict sense of the words, is not in any way an attempt to account for the ultimate constitution of matter; and, if this is not the case with all text-books, it should not be forgotten that such works are written for the sole purpose of teaching the science of chemistry, or heat, or electricity.

When in the hands of the scientist philosopher, the laws of proportions, affinity, periodicity are exalted into an explanation of the essential nature of matter, the beauty of the whole fabric of the science of chemistry vanishes in an instant and shrinks into the distorted semblance of a philosophy like that of Democritus or Leucippus. The actual data will not support the theory when it goes from an imaginative structural account of matter to a description of its essential nature. Comparatively long as this discussion into a particular aspect of transmuted science has been, it is far too brief to do anything like full justice to the better claims of the really philosophical theory that wisely distinguishes between the actual and the potentially existent. But it does bring out to some extent the force of the contention that of the old explanation of the essence of material beings has had and has nothing to fear from the advance of exact scientific learning. It puts the fact in its true light—that philosophy must ever strive with philosophy, that there is really no level meeting ground between an exact science and one that transcending all the conditions upon which that exactness is based, professes to account for nature and essences. The concept which we denote by the word person has in no sense been changed by the enlarging of the boundaries of science. That a revived philosophy should attempt to check it only puts the hands of the clock back some twenty-five hundred years in the history of reason. Is it, then, the case that those who urge a reconstruction of theological statements in the light of modern science really wish to have dogma explained and retranslated into the

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Father Feehan, Bishop of Fall River.

Succeeds Late Bishop Stang.

Press despatches from Rome announce the appointment of Rev. Daniel F. Feehan, permanent rector of St. Bernard's Church at Pittsburg, Mass., to the bishopric of Fall River diocese, to succeed Bishop William Stang, who died recently. The names of many prominent members of the Catholic clergy have been mentioned in connection with the appointment, including those of Rev. Dr. James Shanahan, professor at the Catholic University at Washington; Msgr. Kennedy, of Philadelphia, and Rev. James Coyle, of Taunton. The Fall River diocese has a large French Catholic population. Father Feehan is a fluent French speaker.

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Rev. Daniel F. Feehan, P.R., was born in Athol, Mass., in 1855. He was graduated from St. Mary's College, this city, in June, 1876, and was ordained to the priesthood December 20, 1879, by Bishop McNierney.

Father Feehan has always been a strong advocate of total abstinence. In speaking of his appointment, ex-Mayor Fordick, of Pittsburg, said that "for many years Father Feehan was the strongest single force in the city in assisting to success the non-licence campaigns and in upholding same temperance work." A. C. Brown, president of the Reform club, expressed the same sentiment. The Rev. Charles E. Spaulding, pastor of the First Methodist Church, said: "I have written Father Feehan expressing my regret at his departure. I have found him ever a man of such character as would be a loss to any community. He made his personality felt in temperance work, and has shown a fraternal spirit to pastors of other denominations."

No Catholic Party.

Refutation by the Rev. Editor Central Catholic.

Under the heading "Made Out of Whole Cloth—A Sensational Newspaper Fabrication," the Rev. Lewis J. Drummond, in the current issue of the Central Catholic, covers his own signature, denies the statement made recently by the Regina Standard that Archbishop Langevin, in his recent visit to Regina, conferred with "agents of the church" and reached a decision to organize a clerical party in Saskatchewan in readiness for the next provincial elections. After quoting the Standard article in full, Father Drummond says:

"This article was sent to me shortly after its publication, but I awaited His Grace's return from the

west at the end of last week to find out if there was any foundation for this astonishing article. The Most Reverend Archbishop of St. Boniface, in the course of a long interview on this and other matters, charged me to give an absolute denial to the story faked by the Regina Standard. His Grace did indeed visit Regina, and conversed with many persons there; but not one word was said about political organization; not one of the questions so boldly handled and so recklessly decided by the Standard was even so much as broached. Mr. Langevin's time was completely taken up with parish matters and private consultations about the spiritual needs of his parishioners. Thus not one word of the Standard article, so far as it concerns the Archbishop of St. Boniface, is true. The running of Catholic candidates was not the cause of His Grace's visit to Regina. There was no meeting of the most energetic agents of the Church, and therefore, there was no decision by that imaginary meeting to place Roman Catholic candidates in nomination at the next provincial election, with a view to establishing a third party in the province which shall be devoted to the interests of the Church." The rest of the article is mainly a series of gratuitous inferences from supposed facts made out of whole cloth in the Standard office.

"To make this denial as clear as possible, I depart for once from the anonymity of the editorial chair, and, at His Grace's request, sign my own name to this absolute denial of a shameful fabrication, prompted, as the sequel to the Standard article shows, by political party considerations."

"LEWIS DRUMMOND, S.J."

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