God the teacher
of mankind

by
Michael Müller

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GOD THE TEACHER

OF

MANKIND:

A PLAIN, COMPREHENSIVE EXPLANATION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

GRACE AND THE SACRAMENTS:

BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION, EXTREME UNCTION, HOLY ORDERS AND MATRIMONY.

BY

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[Handwritten notes]
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY.

A certain pilgrim travelled by night through a vast forest, and came at last to a rural chapel. He entered to pray, and soon fell asleep. On awaking toward daybreak, he noticed above the altar a painted window. He felt indignant, and said to himself: "What a miserable dauber, who has spoiled the window by such coarse and dark colors! Only a blind or an insane man would paint a window in that style." By and by the warm and bright sun arose. The pilgrim looked again at the window. Oh, what a wondrous change! How the colors glowed like purple and gold in the bright sunshine! He saw a beautiful painting tenderly expressive, so fresh, so life-like! It represented the burning bush glowing with celestial light. There was Moses prostrate on the ground; there, in the green meadow, were the snow-white sheep, and over all was the clear blue sky. The pilgrim's soul was filled with wonder and delight. An inner voice whispered to him: "God's dealings with the world often seem to short-sighted man quite dark and unintelligible. But the first ray of the eternal Sun on the day of doom shall show to all how wise and just and loving is God in all his works."

This fault-finding pilgrim represents those who easily search into matters too high, into the hidden ways and secret judgments of God. "Why," they ask, "is this man left thus, and that other raised to so high a degree of
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grace! Why is this person so much lowered, whilst that other is so much exalted? Why does not God distribute his graces to all in the same measure?"

Things that exceed all human understanding should be let alone. The judgments of God are to be feared, but not to be scrutinized. To possess the grace of God is much better than to dive into the incomprehensible mysteries of grace. To humble ourselves for having so often abused divine grace, is more profitable than to ask unprofitable questions about how it is distributed. To make ourselves more and more worthy of his grace by true penance and humble, persevering prayer, is more pleasing to God than to lose our time in useless reflections on predestination. To say with the prophet, "Thou art just, O Lord! and thy judgments are right, and justified in themselves," is wiser than to write subtle theological disquisitions; to utter opinions that were never taught by the fathers and doctors and martyrs of the Church, and to explain things in such a way that others become disturbed in mind.

The principal object in explaining the Catholic doctrine of grace should be, to show clearly that our salvation from first to last is the gift of God; that, as God is the beginning and the end of all things, so he is, of our salvation; that, without the help of his grace, we cannot do anything toward putting ourselves into the state of grace, performing good works worthy of heaven, and persevering in the grace of God; that his grace begins the work of our salvation, continues it, and also finishes it on condition that we coöperate with his grace; that, were God not to finish the work of our salvation, it would never be finished, it would rather be reversed; that God has given to every man the great means of prayer by which he may obtain his grace and
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persevere to the end. This great truth should be constantly impressed upon the mind and heart of the people, in such a manner, however, that the answer given by an actor to a preacher may not be applicable to the teacher of religion. "How is it," said a certain preacher to an actor, "that I cannot secure the attention and sympathy of my audience in matters which most deeply concern them, whilst you so easily succeed in fascinating your audience in matters which are only fictitious?" "Why," said the actor, "I speak of fictions as if they were realities, whilst you speak of realities as if they were fictions."

If we would wish that, in explaining religion, this answer should not be applicable to us, we must make a constant study of religion, especially of the truths most difficult to be explained. It is by constant study of religion that we acquire a great facility of illustrating it and making it interesting to all classes; that we become "like a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old." (Matt. xiii, 52.) As a father of a family uses different means to support his family, so, too, the good teacher of religion presents Catholic truths in different ways, in order to make his fellow-men understand them the better, love them the more ardently, and live up to them the more faithfully. He uses all kinds of parables, similes, and stories, that bring those truths into clearer light, and impress them more deeply upon the minds and hearts of those whom he instructs. "He bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old;" that is to say, he uses things already known, in order that what is new and unintelligible may be better understood. He expresses sublime doctrines, in language so simple, that a child without effort can understand them.
INTRODUCTORY.

All learning requires time and labor. Why, then, should we not use time and labor to acquire a thorough knowledge of the truths of our religion, and to make the most important of all subjects as interesting as possible? The case might be a little different, says an anonymous writer, were we living in a country in which the influence of good homes, and the spirit and tradition of the place, are sufficient to make young people practically acquainted with, at least, all that is necessary to salvation. They would then naturally fall into the Catholic ways and sentiments of those among whom they live. But it is not so in this irreligious and infidel country. The traditions of this country are against Catholic feeling and practice. The influences of home are often evil influences. Hence our youth have to learn the knowledge and practice of religion from their teachers, or very often they do not learn it at all. After the protection of God's grace, there is no better preservative against infidelity, vice, and corruption, than a thorough knowledge of our religion. If we are able to give the reason of the faith that is in us, "we shall no longer, as children, be carried about with every wind of doctrine." (Eph. iv, 14.)
CHAPTER II.

ON GRACE.

(According to the Doctrine of St. Alphonsus.)

We read in the Acts of the Apostles that, when Herod saw that he pleased the Jews by persecuting the apostles, "he proceeded to take up Peter also. And when he had apprehended him he cast him into prison, delivering him to four files of soldiers to be kept, intending, after the pasch, to bring him forth to the people. Peter, therefore, was kept in prison. But prayer was made without ceasing by the Church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by him: and a light shined in the room; and he, striking Peter on the side, raised him up, saying: Arise quickly. And the chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said to him: Gird thyself, and put on thy sandals. And he did so. And he said to him: Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And going out he followed him, and he knew not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. And passing through the first and the second ward, they came to the iron gate that leadeth to the city, which of itself opened to them. And going out, they passed on through one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. And Peter, coming to himself, said: Now I know in very deed that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod,
and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And considering, he came to the house of Mary, ... where many were gathered together and praying.” (Acts, xii.)

This history of the wonderful deliverance of St. Peter by an angel of light, is a good illustration of the Catholic doctrine of grace. Herod represents Satan, and Peter represents every individual of mankind. Herod did not cease to persecute the head of the Church. Satan has never ceased to persecute mankind. Herod cast Peter into a dark prison, to bring him forth to the Jewish people. Satan has cast mankind into the dark prison of sin, to bring them forth to his companions in hell. Herod bound Peter with chains. Satan bound all mankind with the chains of their passions. Herod delivered Peter to four files of soldiers who should keep him and make escape impossible. Satan places a strong guard around every man,—a strong guard, namely, evil spirits, bad, false doctrines, and evil examples of wicked companions, that they may keep him captive in sin. Peter slept in a dark prison. By the fall of our first parents man's intellect became greatly darkened, his will extremely weakened and strongly inclined to evil, and his soul was sleeping in the frightful darkness of sin. From that time man was blind as to the supernatural happiness for which he had been created, and as to the means of reaching it. Peter, of himself, was unable to rid himself of his chains and escape from the prison. The sinner, of himself, is unable to free himself from the chains of his sins, from the darkness of his intellect, from the weakness of his will, and from his blindness as to his eternal happiness and the means of reaching it.

“But prayer was made without ceasing by the Church unto God” for Peter's safety and deliverance. If the
sinner prays to God without ceasing for his eternal salvation and deliverance from all obstacles to his eternal happiness, the Lord, according to promise, will not fail to hear his prayer. In his infinite wisdom and mercy he will provide for him means by which he may recover the friendship of God. And the angel made "the chains of Peter fall off from his hands." The grace of God disposes the sinner for deliverance from the chains of his sins, and for the return to God's friendship.

"And the angel said to Peter: Gird thyself, and put on thy sandals. And he did so." The angel performed for Peter what Peter could not perform. Peter could not make the angel come down from heaven and light his prison. In like manner, it is not in the power of the sinner to make God come to him, enlighten his mind, and raise him up by means of faith, hope, and charity. All this is the free, gratuitous gift of God's infinite mercy.

The angel came to Peter whilst he was asleep. Such a favor could not have been expected by the apostle. In like manner, the grace of God comes and enlightens the sinner whilst he is, as it were, asleep in sin and unbelief, to show more clearly that it is bestowed quite gratuitously, and without the least merit on the part of the sinner.

"And behold an angel of the Lord stood by him (Peter), and a light shined in the room." An angel, that is, the grace of God, must come and stand by the sinner, and its light must shine into the chamber of his soul, that he may see his misery and the danger of being condemned to eternal torments.

"And he (the angel), striking Peter on the side, raised him up, saying: Arise quickly." The grace of God must strike the sinner on the side; that is, it must fill the sinner
with great fear of God's justice and of hell; it must raise him, that is, inspire him with confidence in God's mercy, and with hope for the pardon of his sins. This confident hope will make him hear, as it were, the encouraging voice saying, "Arise quickly:" arise from your state of sin, leave your spiritual captivity, and return to God's friendship. But the angel did not do for Peter what Peter himself was able to do. He therefore told him to gird himself and put on his sandals. And Peter did so. He was free not to do so. In like manner, God wishes the sinner to do what his grace has enabled him to do. God offers him the grace of faith, hope, and charity, saying: Gird yourself with this grace. Here I have for you the sandals of sorrow and humility; put them on, and prepare yourself for receiving still greater gifts. The sinner, however, is left perfectly free to accept the grace of God or to reject it.

"And the angel said to Peter: Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And going out he followed him." When the sinner, by faith, hope, charity, and contrition, is prepared to receive God's grace, the Lord says to him: Cast thy garment about thee by means of baptism,—the garment of my grace and friendship, and follow me, by keeping my commandments. As Peter was free to follow or not to follow the angel who was leading him out of prison into the city of Jerusalem, so the sinner always remains free to follow or not to follow this grace of God, which is leading him out of his spiritual captivity into the city of God's children: "And Peter knew not that it was true which was done by the angel." In like manner, it often happens that many a sinner who has been converted by the grace of God, does not at first know and understand that his conversion has been brought about by the grace of God.
ON GRACE.

"And passing through the first and the second ward, they came to the iron gate that leadeth to the city, which of itself opened to them." When the sinner has passed the first ward, that is, through the acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition, and then through the second ward, that is, baptism or penance, he comes to the iron gate, that is, the practice of the Catholic religion, which is the narrow gate to the heavenly city of Jerusalem.

"The iron gate of itself opened to them." This iron gate was for Peter the last obstacle to the recovery of his liberty. He had no means to surmount this obstacle. The angel of the Lord, therefore, opened the gate for him. The practice of the Catholic religion is difficult for human nature. This difficulty is so great, that man of himself can never overcome it. The angel of the Lord (the grace of Almighty God) must always assist him in the compliance with his religious duties, in the performance of good works; it must, as it were, open the iron gate for him—that is, render the practice of religion sweet and easy.

"And going out, they passed on through one street." The angel of the Lord leads Peter through one street; he does not leave him until he sees him perfectly safe. The one narrow street for the just man to travel is that of a truly Christian life. That he may not be lost in this street, the angel of the Lord, the grace of God, must lead and assist him until he is perfectly safe in heaven.

"And immediately the angel departed from him." The grace of God may be forfeited by sin; it leaves the just man as soon as he has the misfortune to commit a mortal sin. To preserve himself from such a misfortune, the just man needs a special grace, called the grace of perseverance, which enables him to remain faithful to the Lord until
death. Then it is that, like St. Peter, he will come to himself, and exclaim with him: "Now I know in very deed that the Lord hath sent his angel,"—his grace to make me see and walk on the road to heaven,—"and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod,"—out of the hands of the devil, of the wicked world, and of corrupt nature,—"and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews,"—that is, from all the expectation of the evil spirits, of wicked companions, and of my own tyrannical passions.

"And considering, Peter came to the house of Mary, where many were gathered together and praying." The reward granted to Peter for having followed the angel, was the recovery of his liberty, and the exceedingly great pleasure of being again united, in the house of Mary, to the holy Christians of the city of Jerusalem. In the heavenly city of Jerusalem, the house of the Blessed Virgin Mary, all the faithful servants of the Lord will be rewarded for having obeyed the inspirations of grace and performed good works: their reward will be the most excellent of liberties,—that of enjoying the gift of impeccability, and the unspeakable pleasure of being inseparably united to God and all his angels and saints for ever and ever. Thus the salvation of man, from the beginning to the end, is God's gift, united with the cooperation of man. Let us now explain all these points by following the questions of the Catechism.
NECESSITY OF GRACE.

§ I.—WHAT WE OF OURSELVES CAN DO.

1. Can we of ourselves keep the commandments?

No; we need the grace of God to keep them.

Of ourselves we can do only what is not above our natural strength. Whenever we are to do something above our natural strength, we need the help of another. Man is endowed with great natural gifts,—with the gifts of understanding, will, and memory. By means of these gifts, man can do great things: he can learn languages, build churches, palaces, great cities, steamboats, railroads; he can count days, dates, distances, and money. By the natural power of his reason, man can understand various kinds of truths about this world, about human society, about the realms of space, about matter, about the soul. By his natural reason, man can inquire, argue, and draw conclusions, about religious truth. His thoughts and words, however, about religious truths will not extend beyond mere reasoning.

Dr. Newman tells us that, some years ago, there was much talk in the world of a man of science, who was said to have found out a new planet. How did he find it out? Did he watch night after night, wearily and perseveringly, in the chill air, through the tedious course of the starry heavens, for what he might find there, till at length, by means of some powerful glass, he discovered, in the dim distance, this unexpected addition to our planetary system?
Far from it. It is said that he sat at his ease in his library, and made calculations on paper in the daytime; and thus, without looking once up at the sky, he determined, from what was already known of the sun and the planets, of their number, their positions, their motions, and their influences, that, in addition to them all, there must be some other body in that very place where he said it would be found, if astronomers did but turn their instruments upon it. Here was a man who read the heavens, not with eyes, but by reason. In like manner, reason and conscience may lead the natural man to discover, and, in a measure, pursue, objects which are, properly speaking, supernatural and divine. The natural reason is able, from the things which are seen, from the voice of tradition, from the existence of the soul, and from the necessity of the case, to infer the existence of God.

A man without eyes may talk about forms and colors. A blind man may pick up a good deal of information of various kinds, and be very conversant with the objects of sight, though he does not see. He may be able to talk about them fluently, and may be fond of doing so; he may even talk of seeing as if he really saw, till he almost seems to pretend to the faculty of sight. He speaks of heights and distances and directions, and the dispositions of places, and shapes and appearances, as naturally as other men; and yet he is not duly aware of his own pitiable privation. How does this come about? It is partly because he hears what other men say about these things, and he is able to imitate them, and partly because he cannot help reasoning upon the things he hears and drawing conclusions from them; and thus he comes to think that he knows what he does not know at all.
ON GRACE.

Now, this will explain the way in which the natural man is able partly to understand, and still more to speak upon, supernatural subjects. There is a large floating body of Catholic truth in the world. It comes down by tradition from age to age; it is carried forward by preaching and profession from one generation to another, and is poured about into all quarters of the world. It is found in fulness and purity in the Church alone; but portions of it, larger or smaller, escape far and wide, and penetrate into places which have never been under the teaching of divine grace. Now, men may take up and profess these scattered truths, merely because they fall in with them. These fragments of revelation, such as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, or of the Atonement, are the religion which they have been taught in their childhood; and therefore they retain them, and profess them, and repeat them, without really seeing them as the Catholic sees them, but as receiving them merely by word of mouth, from imitation of others. In this way it often happens that a man, external to the Catholic Church, writes sermons and instructions, draws up and arranges devotions, or composes hymns, which are faultless, or nearly so, which are the fruit, not of his own illuminated mind, but of his careful study, sometimes of his accurate translation, of Catholic originals. The natural heart can burst forth, by fits and starts, into emotions of love toward God. The natural imagination can depict the beauty and glory of the divine attributes.

Catholic truths and rites are so beautiful, so great, so consolatory, that they draw one on to love and admire them with a natural love, as a prospect might draw them on, or a skilful piece of mechanism. Hence men of lively
imagination profess this doctrine or that, or adopt this or that ceremony or usage, for their mere beauty's sake, not asking themselves whether they are true, and having no real perception or mental hold of them. Thus, too, they will decorate their churches, stretch and strain their ritual, and attempt candles, vestments, flowers, incense, and processions, not from faith, but from poetical feeling.

Moreover, the Catholic Creed, as coming from God, is so harmonious, so consistent with itself, holds together so perfectly, so corresponds part to part, that an acute mind, knowing one portion of it, would often infer another portion, merely as a matter of just reasoning. Thus an accurate thinker might be sure that, if God is infinite and man finite, there must be mysteries in religion. It is not that he feels the mysteriousness of religion, but he infers it; he is led to it as a matter of necessity; and, from mere clearness of mind and love of consistency, he maintains it.

Learned men, outside the Church, may compose most useful works on the evidences of religion, or in defence of particular doctrines, or in explanation of the whole scheme of Catholicism. In these cases reason becomes the handmaid of faith. Still it is not faith; it does not rise above an intellectual view or notion; it affirms, not as grasping the truth, not as seeing, but as “being of opinion,” as “judging,” as “coming to a conclusion.”

The natural man, then, can feel; he can imagine, he can admire, he can reason, he can infer. In all these ways he may proceed to receive the whole or part of Catholic truth; but he cannot see, he cannot love. His religious sentiments may be right and good in themselves, but not in him. His heretical sentiments on other points are a proof that he does not see what he speaks of.
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The natural conscience may ascertain and put in order the truths of the great moral law, nay, even to the condemnation of that concupiscence which it is too weak to subdue, and is persuaded to tolerate. The natural will can do many things really good and praiseworthy; nay, in particular cases, or at particular seasons, when temptation is away, it may seem to have strength which it has not, and to be imitating the austerity and purity of a saint. One man has no temptation to hoard; another has no temptation to gluttony and drunkenness; another has no temptation to ill-humor; another has no temptation to be ambitious and overbearing. Hence human nature may often show to advantage; it may be meek, amiable, kind, benevolent, generous, honest, upright, and temperate. Hence a man may talk of Christ and heaven, too, read Scripture, and "do many things gladly," in consequence of reading, and exercise a certain sort of belief, however different from that faith which is imparted to us by grace. The natural man, therefore, before he is brought under the grace of God, can but inquire, reason, argue, and conclude, about religious truth, but he does not and cannot see it. (Dr. Newman, on Grace.)

§ 2.—WHAT OF OURSELVES WE CANNOT DO.

The natural man needs light to see material objects; and he likewise needs light in order to see the truths which God has revealed. These truths are of a supernatural and mysterious character. Our whole religion is a deep mystery. To see it, man needs supernatural light, or the grace of God. Now, though his mind be the eyes, the grace of God is the light. He is born under a privation
of this blessed spiritual light; and whilst this privation continues, he will not, cannot, really see the truths of religion. I do not say he will have no thought about God and his revelation, nor be able to talk about him. True, but he will not be able to do more than reason about him. Man, then, of himself cannot raise himself above the level of his nature. To be able to see and believe truths of a supernatural character, his understanding must receive supernatural light; to practise a religion which requires the mortification of the senses, the crucifixion of the natural man, his will must be strengthened and upheld by a supernatural power. To love what is revolting to nature, the heart of man must be endowed with supernatural love. To be able to be united with God in heaven, we must be like unto God; for, only things of the same nature unite. We must be holy; the life of our souls must be a divine or supernatural life. We must have ceased to be purely natural men. God must live in our souls. Now, it is not in our own power to make ourselves holy and pleasing to God; we cannot make God come down into our soul and unite himself to it, and make us lead a divine life. We are as little able to do this as an animal is to change itself into a human being. God, in his infinite mercy, must come to us, draw us to himself, and always assist us in leading holy lives to the hour of our death. He must come to us by faith, enlightening us so as to see and believe the truths of religion; he must come to us by hope, inspiring us with sincere sorrow for our sins and a confident hope of pardon; he must come to us by charity, inflaming us with love for him and all his commandments; and God must stay with us to the end of our lives, and assist us in keeping his holy precepts.
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These great truths are clearly expressed in Holy Scripture. "I am the vine," says our divine Saviour, "you the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for, without me you can do nothing." (John xv, 5.) From these words of Christ it is evident that, of ourselves, we can do nothing, absolutely nothing, in thought, word, or deed, toward the work of our salvation; that grace is absolutely necessary to begin, to continue, and to finish, this great work. Now, the beginning of our salvation is the thought of salvation. From the thought of salvation arises the desire of salvation. The desire of salvation prepares the soul to comply with the conditions of salvation. Now, the first condition of salvation is true faith. The beginning of true faith, then, is the desire thereof, arising from the thought of salvation. The pious desire of faith, however, is not yet formal faith; it is but the good thought of wishing to believe, which, as St. Augustine says, precedes belief. Now, this good thought does not arise from the natural light of the intellect, by which man is capable of seeing some truths of faith; it is inspired by the grace of God, "who worketh in you," says St. Paul, "both to will and to accomplish." (Phil. ii, 13.) "Without my grace," said our Lord to St. Catharine of Sienna, "you would not even desire to be saved." It is by the thought of salvation that God begins the work of man's salvation. "No man," says Jesus Christ, "can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him" (John, vi, 44); that is, draw him by the thought and desire of being saved. And this desire of salvation, inspired by Almighty God, must also be accomplished by him; he must enlighten man to see and believe the truths of salvation. "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jona," said
our Lord to St. Peter; "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven." That is to say, it is not from the natural light of the intellect, but from a particular light of grace, that you know that I am the Son of God; for "no one knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal him."

With our own strength, therefore, we cannot even dispose ourselves to receive from God such graces as lead us to him who is life everlasting; for such graces are of the supernatural order, and therefore a disposition merely natural cannot dispose us to receive a supernatural grace. "Not that we are sufficient," says St. Paul, "to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God." (2 Cor. iii, 5.) The grace of God is also necessary to continue and finish the work of our salvation. Who, without grace, could fulfil the first and most important commandment, which is to love God above all things? "Charity is from God." (1 John iv, 9.) "The charity of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost." (Rom. v, 5.) Holy charity is a pure gift of God, and we cannot obtain it by our own strength. How could we, without grace, conquer temptations, especially grievous ones? "Being pushed," says holy David, "I was overturned that I might fall, but the Lord supported me." (Ps. cxvii, 13.) "No one," says the Wise Man, "can be continent (that is, resist temptations of concupiscence) except God gave it." (Wisd. viii, 21.) Hence the apostle, speaking of the temptations which assault us, says: "But in all these things we overcome because of him that hath loved us." (Rom. viii, 37.) And again: "Thanks be to God who always maketh us to triumph in Christ." (2 Cor. ii, 14.) St. Paul, therefore, thanks God for the victory over
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temptations, acknowledging that he conquers them by the power of grace. Now, this gratitude, as St. Augustine says, would be in vain, if the victory were not the gift of God.

Certain heretics have falsely asserted that the knowledge of the law was sufficient to enable us to observe it. It is, no doubt, a grace of God to know his law: "Blessed art thou, O Israel! to whom the Lord has made known his will." But by this grace only we are not able to observe the commandments. For, if man, purely by the aid of the law, could observe the law, then Jesus Christ died in vain, as St. Paul tells us. (Gal. ii, 21.) But such is not the case. To keep the commandments, we stand in need of actual grace; and this actual grace was procured for us by the death of Jesus Christ. Nay, so far is the knowledge of the law alone not sufficient for the observance of the commandments, that, as the apostle says, the very law itself is the cause of our transgressing the law. "When I lived without the law, sin was dead; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." (Rom. vii, 8.) St. Augustine gives the reason why the knowledge of the law renders us guilty rather than innocent. This happens, he says, because, such is the condition of our corrupt will, that, loving liberty, it is carried with more vehemence to what is prohibited than to what is permitted. It is therefore God's grace which causes us to love and to do what we know we ought to do. This great truth was declared by God, many centuries ago, in these words: "I will cause you to walk in my commandments, and keep my judgments and do them." (Ezech. xxxvi, 27.) Consequently, man does, as St. Leo I says, only as much good as God, by his grace, enables him to do. It
is therefore an article of faith that no one can do the least good work meritorious of heaven, without God's particular assistance.

§ 3.—WHAT GRACE IS, AND HOW IT IS DIVIDED.

2. What is grace?

Grace is a gratuitous gift of God, which helps us to attain eternal life.

The word grace means, in general, a gift, a favor, a kindness, liberally granted, which is not due to us by any title whatever; for, if it were due to us, it would not be a grace. God bestows upon us natural and supernatural graces. Natural graces are those purely natural gifts which regard the present life; such as the use of reason, free-will, soundness of judgment, depth of comprehension, the faculties of thinking, arguing, drawing conclusions, seeing, hearing, feeling, and such like blessings. These natural graces are given to man inasmuch as he is a created being, but they cannot raise him above the nature or condition of man. However, by the help of supernatural graces, they can become the means of salvation.

By supernatural graces are meant the aids which God grants to man, in order to raise him from his natural to a supernatural state, in which he is capable of gaining eternal life, of seeing God face to face, and of enjoying him forever in heaven.

Divines distinguish different kinds of supernatural aid or grace as, sufficient, actual, sanctifying grace, and the grace of perseverance. Sufficient grace is that which God gives to all men, in order that, by the proper use of it, they may be saved.
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Grace is called actual, when it really assists or actually helps us, either to dispose ourselves for receiving sanctifying grace, or to perform our duties as children of God. Actual grace, therefore, is an operation of God by which the mind of man is enlightened, his will excited, and his heart inflamed, to perform some good work, to repress an evil passion, to reform a bad habit, to surmount a temptation, to fulfill a duty relative to his salvation, to detest and be truly sorry for his sins, and purpose firmly to keep the commandments, and make use of the means by which God communicates sanctifying grace to his soul, or preserves and increases it when communicated. Actual grace, when preceding the deliberate action of the will, is called, according to the different aspects under which it is viewed, "anticipating," "exciting," "operating," while, when coming after, it is called "subsequent." Sanctifying grace is that great supernatural gift by which God frees our souls from sin, and makes us just and holy, his children, and heirs to the kingdom of heaven. By this grace God communicates himself to our souls, not only spiritually, but also personally, by giving to us the Holy Ghost.

Besides actual and sanctifying graces, we need another, which enables us to remain faithful to grace until we enter upon eternal life. This special grace is called the gift of perseverance. Upon this gift our salvation depends.

Divines speak also of another kind of graces, which they call graces gratuitously bestowed: gratiae gratiae datae. These graces are given to certain men for the conversion of infidels, heretics, sinners, or for the instruction of the faithful; in a word, for the benefit of their fellow-men. Such graces are the gifts of miracles, languages, prophecy, the talent for preaching, instructing, etc. "To one is
given," says St. Paul, "the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge; to another, faith; to another, the grace of healing; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of speeches." (1 Cor. xii, 7-10.)

St. Bernard had received a wonderful gift of performing miracles. However, he was more desirous to bring his flesh under subjection, than to restore the dead to life. Indeed, as a miracle is an act of God above the ordinary laws and rules of nature, so a meritorious action, performed in a proper spirit of charity, says St. Francis de Sales, is a miracle of grace, worth a hundred pounds of what divines call gratuitous graces, amongst which is that of operating miracles. The latter can exist even in a soul wedded to sin, and many have possessed it who will not be found in heaven; for our Lord has told us that, on the day of judgment, many will say to him: "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and cast out devils in thy name, and in thy name done many miracles? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity." (Matt. vii, 22, 23.) Those gratuitous gifts do not render him who possesses them, better and holier in the sight of God; whilst he who dies in the least degree of sanctifying grace, cannot be lost, and has a claim to the inheritance of God.
§ 4.—THE GRACE OF GOD IS A GRATUITOUS GIFT.

The right of seeing God, the infinite Being in himself, belongs to God alone; and no creature or finite being, as such, can have any claim to that infinite bliss, nor consequently to any of the means which lead thereto. As eternal happiness, the possession of God, or anything leading to it, does not belong to the nature of man, God is under no greater obligation to raise him to a state in which he is rendered capable of seeing and enjoying his Creator, than he is to raise a stone to the nature of an animal.

By his own natural strength man, as we have seen, can acquire much knowledge about God; he can recognize God as the author and preserver of his being, and love him as such. But he can never know and love him so as to deserve to see him face to face. For this, there is needed a life superior to that of man,—a life flowing from God to man, by which a relationship is established between God and man,—a relationship by which God adopts man as his child.

Adam was thus privileged from the beginning. God made him his son, and enabled him to win heaven by obedience. But Adam lost this sonship by his disobedience, and fell back into the state of a mere creature and servant. As he stood for us all, we all fell in him. We were utterly unable to recover our state of innocence and relationship with God. Since the fall, we were altogether unworthy of grace. Now, if God, through the merits of his Son, has given us back even greater gifts than we lost in Adam, it is clear that every one of these gifts is a pure, gratuitous gift of his infinite mercy and charity.
The Apostle St. Paul shows, in several places, that divine grace is in everything gratuitous, and comes from the mercy of God alone, and is independent of our natural merits. In one place he says: "For unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him." (Phil. i, 29.) Therefore, as St. Augustine says (lib. ii, de Præd., c. 2), it is a gift of God, not only to suffer for love of him, but even to believe in him; and, if it is a gift of God, it cannot be given us through our merits. The apostle writes the same thing to the Corinthians, telling them that "he had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." (Cor. vii, 25.) It is therefore not through any merit of ours that we are faithful to the mercy of God.

St. Paul next shows most clearly that, whenever we receive light from God, or strength to act, it is not by our own merits, but by a gratuitous gift of God. "For who distinguisheth thee," says the apostle, "or what hast thou, that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. iv, 7.) If grace were given according to our natural merits, derived solely from the strength of our free-will, then these natural merits would distinguish a man who thus works out his salvation, from one who does not do so. St. Augustine even says that, if God would give us only free-will,—that is, a will free and indifferent either to good or evil, according as we use it,—in case the good will would come from ourselves and not from God, then what came from ourselves would be better than what comes from God. (Lib. ii, de Pec. Mer., c. 18.) But it is not so; for the apostle tells us that whatever we have from God is all gratuitously given to us, and therefore we should not pride ourselves on it.
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The gratuity of grace is also strongly confirmed by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans (xi, 5, 6): "Even so, then, at this present time also, there is a remnant saved according to the election of grace." (The apostle means by "the remnant" those few Jews who were faithful among the multitude of unbelievers.) "And if by grace, it is not now by works; otherwise, grace is no more grace." Now, the apostle could not express in stronger terms the Catholic truth, that grace is a gratuitous gift of God, and depends, not on the merits of our free-will, but on the mere liberality of the Lord.

The grace of God helps us to attain eternal life. The divine grace is granted by the Lord with a view to our salvation; for, the end which God proposes to himself in granting graces is the salvation of our souls. He intends and wishes that, by means of his grace, we should be helped to perform such acts and works as will secure the eternal happiness of our souls.

§ 5.—HOW THE GRACE OF GOD HELPS US TO ATTAIN ETERNAL LIFE.

3. How does the grace of God help us?

It enlightens the understanding, and strengthens the will to avoid sin, and to do what God commands.

Man is a being that can be influenced by another for good or for evil. "Evil communications corrupt good manners," is a proverb as old as human experience. There is an infidel. He knows how to pervert the plainest ideas. The gratification of low, beastly passions, he dignifies with the sweet, baulowed name of love. Shameful lust he paints as a fond, romantic passion; infidelity he declares to be the mark of a strong mind; disobedience is but
honorable independence of character; pride is noble self-respect. Man, he says, is a free being. He, therefore, has a right to gratify every desire of his heart, and to enjoy every earthly pleasure.

With regard to the next life, he speaks to every one in the manner best suited to his natural character. To some he says: "There is nothing hereafter: it is all over with death." To another: "The future is uncertain. No one has ever come back from the other world. How foolish, then, to sacrifice the present certain happiness for an uncertain, dreamy future! 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'" To others he tells that they shall be translated from the joys of this life to the endless joys of the next. The great Father is loving and merciful, you know. And even at the very worst, those who have been imprudent in this life will, perhaps, have to wander from star to star until they are entirely purified. Beyond the starry spheres there dwells the great Father of all, and he has not the heart to punish his weak, sinful creatures." To others he says that, if there is a hell, it is made only for murderers and highway-robbers, or for those poor, low, ignorant, drunken Papists. Of course, that dreadful place was never intended for those refined ladies with their diamonds, nor for those polite and witty gentlemen so humane that their hearts overflow with compassion at the sight of a lame horse. Now, let a young man, who is yet a practical Catholic, often associate with such an infidel, and he will soon realize the proverb, "Evil communications corrupt good manners."

But I have here met a great and good man, I associate with him, and I am never afterward what I was before. I feel that a virtue has gone forth from him and entered into
my life, so that I am not, and can never be again, the man I was before I met him. What is the explanation of this fact? How happens it that I am benefited by my intercourse with the good, and injured by my intercourse with the bad? How is it that one man is able to influence another, whether for good or for evil? What is the meaning of influence itself? Influence: in-flowing, flowing in,—what is this but the fact that man is a being depending on another either for good or for evil? Now, what is the good on which man depends?

The good of each being is that which makes the being better and more perfect. It is clear that inferior beings cannot make superior ones better and more perfect. Now, the soul, being immortal, is superior to all earthly or perishable things. These, then, cannot make the soul better and more perfect, but rather worse than she is; for, he who seeks what is worse than himself, makes himself worse than he was before. Therefore, the good—the life of the soul—can be only that which is better and more excellent than the soul herself is. Now, God alone is this Good—he being supreme goodness itself. He who possesses God, may be said to possess the goodness of all other things; for, whatever goodness they possess, they have from God. Now, the soul of man is the likeness of God: communion, therefore, between God and man is easy, for like communes with like; in other words, it is easy for God to commune with man or influence him for good, to make him better and more perfect than he is. Now, how does God influence us? How does his grace help us? The grace of God helps us by working upon our soul outwardly and inwardly. It works outwardly upon us by the word of God, by pious, instructive reading,
wholesome admonitions, Christian education, wise counsels of pastors, good examples, humiliations, death of friends, poverty, sickness, and other things which God uses to act upon us and draw us to himself. The grace of God works upon us inwardly, when it enlightens the mind to understand the truths of religion; when it inclines the will to believe and embrace the truth; when it inspires the heart with a sincere desire to know and hear the truth; when it enlightens the soul to know its great sinfulness; when it inspires us with a true desire to rid ourselves of sin, and with courage to adopt the means which God has given to free ourselves from sin, to enter again into his friendship, and to persevere in leading holy lives. Such good thoughts and desires, such holy inspirations and lights, such strength and courage, such wholesome affections and pious sentiments, are all so many internal graces of Almighty God to draw us to himself—to life everlasting. This influence of God upon us, or the help of his grace, will be the stronger, the closer our communion is with the Almighty, the only source of all supernatural life and goodness.

§ 6.—GOD GIVES SUFFICIENT GRACE TO ALL MEN TO BE SAVED.

4. Does God give his grace to all men?

*God gives to every man grace to pray, and has promised to hear our prayers.*

From what has been said about the necessity of grace, it might be concluded that a state of nature is utterly destitute of the influences of grace, and that those who are outside the Church are simply actuated by nature. But such is not the case in fact. God gives his grace to all men; and to those who profit by it, he gives more grace. All
men, it is true, have not the same amount of grace: God gives to every one as much as he pleases. The Jews had more grace than the heathens; Christians have more than the Jews. Some individuals have more than others. But he who has least has enough for salvation. "Almighty God does not call," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "without giving, at the same time, to those whom he calls, all that is required to accomplish the end for which he calls." Now, he has called all men to everlasting happiness in heaven. Numberless passages of Holy Scripture prove that God wishes all men to be saved. St. Paul most emphatically asserts that "God wills all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. ii, 4.) Hence he tells us to pray for all: "I desire, first of all," he says, "that supplications be made for all men... for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved," etc. Speaking of our Saviour, St. Paul also says: "Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all." (1 Tim. ii, 6.) If Jesus Christ, then, redeemed all men, he surely wills that all men should be saved. "Come to me," says our dear Saviour, "all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matt. xi, 28.) Come, he says, all you burdened with your sins, and I will repair the ruin which you yourselves have occasioned. When, therefore, Jesus Christ invites all to accept a remedy, he wishes that all should be saved.

St. Peter says: "The Lord dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance." (2 Pet. iii, 9.) Mark this,—that all should return to penance! God does not wish that any one should be damned, even sinners, while in this life, but that all should repent of their sins, and be saved.
Although we offend God by our sins, he does not wish our death, but that we should live. In the book of Wisdom (xi, 25) we read: "Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things thou hast made. . . . Thou sparest all, because they are thine, O Lord! who lovest souls." If God, then, loves all his creatures, and especially the souls he created, and is always ready to pardon those who repent of their sins, how can any one imagine for a moment that God creates souls solely for the purpose of tormenting them in hell? No! God does not wish to see them lost, but saved; and when he sees that we are hurrying to eternal torments by our sins, he implores us to retrace our steps and avoid destruction. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, and why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezech. xxxiii, 11.) Poor sinners, he says, why will you persevere in damning yourselves? Return to me, and you will find again the life which you have lost. Hence it was that our Saviour, viewing Jerusalem, and considering the destruction the Jews were bringing on themselves by the crime of putting him to death, "wept over it." (Luke xix, 41.) In another place he declares that he does not wish the death of the sinner, and even swears thus: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live." (Ezech. xxxiii, 11.) Now, if Almighty God wishes that all men should be saved by the observance of his law, it would no doubt be the height of impiety to suppose that he would lay his commandments upon us and oblige us to keep them under pain of eternal damnation, and, at the same time, withhold those helps without which it is impossible to obey his commands. Nothing can be so contrary to our ideas of the wisdom, goodness, and justice of God, as such a
supposition. Seeing, then, that God bids all men to keep his commandments, we must firmly believe that he gives to every one the grace necessary to obey the divine will, and thus save his soul.

§ 7.—WHAT GRACE GOD GIVES TO ALL MEN TO BE SAVED.

The grace which God gives to all men without exception, and which enables them to obtain from him all the graces necessary for their salvation, is the grace of prayer, and the promise to hear their prayers.

That God gives to every man enough grace to enable him to pray, is evident from the fact that he commands all men to pray to him and ask for his graces: which command he could not give, if he did not give them the grace to pray to him. However, there may be persons who are not able to perform fervent prayers to which God is accustomed to grant those graces which are necessary for salvation. "Prayer, such as it ought to be," says St. Augustine, "is not in our unaided power. The gift of prayer comes from grace, as the apostle says: 'The Spirit helpeth our infirmity; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself asketh for us.'" (Rom. viii, 26.) Thus we cannot even boast of praying, for our very prayer is a gift from God. But as God gives to every one the grace to pray, he gives him through prayer the means of obtaining more grace; and if he perseveres in asking of God the grace of making better prayers, he will be heard. His prayers will gradually become more fervent, and God then will grant his petition for those efficacious graces which enable him to do what has been commanded: and thus will he save his soul.
The Lacedaemonians, in order to make their children expert in the use of the bow, were accustomed to place their food in a position beyond their reach, and they then said: "Now, children, there is your food; shoot it down, if you want it." It is thus that God seems to speak to sinners. "Behold," he says, "poor helpless sinners, my grace is ready for you at any time; aim at it, that is, pray to me for it, if you want it—for as many graces will descend upon you as you will shoot down by the darts of prayer; and should you not even have the desire to pray for my grace, or should you have no fervor in prayer, then ask for the grace to pray with all earnestness and fervor, and be assured this grace shall be given you. If you neglect to do so, you shall certainly perish. I told you often, and I repeat it: 'Call on me, and I will hear you;' 'Ask, and you shall receive;' 'Whatever you ask, you shall receive.' And lest any one should suppose that this promise applied only to the just, I have added purposely: 'Every one who asks, shall receive.' Every one, without exception, whether he be a just man or a sinner, shall receive what he asks of me, but ask he must." Thus God, in his infinite goodness, has promised to give everything to him who prays.

§ 8.—WHAT GRACE THE SINNER OBTAINS BY PRAYER.

5. What grace does the sinner obtain by prayer?

The particular grace to dispose himself for receiving sanctifying grace.

There was once a little girl living in one of our large cities. She had a small rosebush in a flower-pot—it was her only companion. She loved it dearly. The street or lane in which she lived was very narrow, and the houses
were high, so that not a ray of blessed sunshine ever stole into her dark, mouldy room. Now, the child feared that the little flower might die. So she took it every day in her arms, went into the yard, and placed it in the sunshine, and watched it with the greatest joy, while the little flower drank in the warm sunlight.

The sinner must imitate this little child. His rosebush, in which he must take the greatest interest, is his immortal soul. He lives in an atmosphere that is dark with sin, the sweet light of grace penetrates his soul so seldom. The plant that grows in a cellar looks pale and sickly: so does the soul without the light of grace. What is he to do? He must open his heart to God in prayer, as the flower-bud opens its calyx to the sun. Then the Holy Ghost will fill his heart with sweet, heavenly thoughts and desires, just as the sun gives to the rose its lovely hues and its sweet fragrance.

A certain young man, named Lanfranc, was greatly devoted to the study of human sciences, and was renowned for his learning; but, unfortunately, he was careless about the welfare of his immortal soul. One day he was going through a forest on his way to Rouen in France. Suddenly he was attacked by a gang of robbers. They seized him, robbed him of all he had, tied his hands, bandaged his eyes, and finally left him among the brushwood, far away from the main road. Lanfranc called for help, but in vain. Night came on; he was helpless and alone in the vast forest. He now began to review his past life. He wished to pray to God, but he did not know in what manner. Prayer was something he had never practised.

"O my God!" said he at last, "I have spent so much of my time in profane studies, I have exhausted mind and