

ARTICLE VI.

CATHOLIC AND SCIENTIFIC.

BY JOHN FELIX, SYRACUSE, NEW YORK.

WORDS are born when ideas are given expression. A language comes into existence with the growth of ideas and with the effort to preserve the continuity of associated life and tradition. A knowledge, therefore, of the origin and growth of a word, helps to an understanding of its meaning.

Katholikos, or catholic, was originally used by the Greeks to define certain general characteristics of themselves as a people. They never thought of predicating these to the outsiders — the barbarians. From Athens it was taken to Alexandria, where a large and strong university culture gave to it a larger meaning and a wider social application. The Septuagint brought the word from the valley of the Nile to Jerusalem, where religious animosity and social antagonism were hard and strong. All of the literary sympathies and most of the exchanges of its scholars were with the ancient Hebrew college at Babylon. Despite all this, the Alexandrian Greek made its way, and furnished the first Christian preachers and writers with a most suitable means for stating and for carrying their message. Many words of this literature were charged with a new or enlarged meaning. "Catholic" was one of them. It was used sparingly at first; but as the motive and content of the Gospel were uncovered and understood, it passed into general use, and has remained in a state of fixation ever since.

Before the Council of Jerusalem the world-wide reach of revealed love had been authoritatively stated and theoretically accepted. The Samaritans had believed the Word, and, after the laying on of hands, were received into the body of believers. Saint Peter had broken away from the rigid social-religious oppositions of his people by preaching the salvation of the Cross in the home of the Roman Cornelius. The divine approval of his act rejoiced the apostles and brethren in council assembled. And so the decision of the council was that the Faith was neither to be defined nor restricted by local religious notions or customs. The religious tribalism of both Jew and Gentile was judged and rejected. This council, therefore, is the great watershed between that old world of warring cults and social antagonisms, and this modern one, wherein the Catholic ideal is given a larger expression with every decade. Like every other true ideal, it has had to conquer its way. Saint Jude uncovers a section of its warfare in these words: "I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common [Catholic] salvation." Saint Paul contended a good deal of the time against religious tribalism as it originated in the academy at Athens. In the sixteenth century the Genevans rejected very much of the Catholic heritage. One of their most pronounced reactions was a closely reasoned statement of tribalism in their teaching of election and a limited atonement.

The word "scientific" is much used in these days. Webster says that it means "agreeing with, or depending on, the rules or principles of science." This is both clear and sound. Principles or laws postulate the presence and action of life; they are the established lines of action along and over which life travels and does work. Because life is all the time manifesting itself in every zone of reality, laws are continuously

operating in nature and society. Investigation discovers them, and discussion unfolds their content and eliminates the errors of imperfect understanding. The presence of mystery is the invitation to find out more of the greatness of a known law, or possibly an unknown and more beneficent one. The whole creation is encircled, penetrated, and animated by the operative presence of law. Because law is the way God takes to do anything, it is clear that the final standard of measurement is the law controlling in any particular zone of reality. The first step, therefore, in securing reliable knowledge, is that of finding the law controlling a given matter.

Francis Bacon gave expression to these truths in his "No-vum Organum," published in 1603. This great work is imperfect in many ways; its fundamental positions, however, have been perfected by many subsequent workers. His contention that the way to gain safe and reliable knowledge is by investigation, was a direct challenge to the scholastic system. The genesis of this system is as follows: Pythagoras (600 B.C.) said that mind is "the source and measure of all things." Subsequently Aristotle (384 B.C.) developed this claim in a reasoned and philosophical way. It was necessary to have standards of measurement, and so his *universals* came out of his cogitations. In accordance with these, all investigations should proceed and all results harmonize. The system reached its fullest expression in scholasticism. In it the *categories* took the place of the universals. In the realm of religion, the *divine decrees* of John Calvin took the place of the categories. Later on, the *categorical imperative* of Immanuel Kant came out of the same intellectual perspective and method of reasoning. From first to last, the entire system is based on opinion and is, therefore, false in structure and compulsion. Opinion is not truth

nor in any sense the original source of truth. Pilate was astonished when told by the Prisoner at his bar that opinion is not truth.¹ As an educated Roman, he was familiar with the teaching of the schools; and so it was not strange that a great fear and awe came over him on realizing that his system of thinking was shattered. The same tragedy is always acted when Sinai and Athens come together.

The scholastics were never as strong in England as on the Continent. This was so because there Hebrew culture rooted deep and grew to enduring strength before the Norman Conquest. They were strong enough, however, to pounce upon Bacon like a pack of infuriated wolves. It was their system or his system. In the thirteenth century their predecessors had treated Roger Bacon without consideration. Later generations have removed the contempt heaped upon him, and placed his name at the head of modern scientists. Conditions had greatly changed in the seventeenth century. The English Church and Nation had done a vast deal more than make good the struggle for religious and political freedom; her scholars had conquered the right to investigate and reason as they saw fit. It is difficult to visualize to-day all that this meant then, because the intellectual despotism of scholastic opinion was then so recent. Much has been said about the political and literary glory of the Elizabethan period; indeed, the more it is discussed, the more clearly is seen its robust strength and healthy beauty. Nothing like enough has been said of the intellectual freedom to investigate and to reason, conquered in defiance of scholastic opinion. This was the really essential gain. It was the stupendous advance in freedom to think which made it impossible that another

¹The statement "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth," made the truth other and superior to personal speculation and power of measurement.

Sir Thomas More should be executed for advocating liberty of conscience on other than religious things.

At just the right time Bacon began to show that the way to gather reliable knowledge is first to find the law controlling in any department of society or nature. This is the scientific method, and has just as much application to religion as to the stars in their courses or the rivers running to the sea. The whole creation of seen and unseen reality is sustained and moved by the impartation of divine power, and this manifested energy operates over lines of action, or laws, which were ordained and established before the morning stars sang together. The scientific man stakes the interests of his soul on that truth both for time and eternity. In its quietness and rest is his confidence and strength. The involved intellectual culture is that of the first chapter of Genesis, where the reign of law is postulated and affirmed. It was the mental system of Moses. As he herded the flock of Jethro, he saw a bush enveloped in flame but it was not consumed. Had he been a scholastic, he would have said: "Let's see, what category or opinion does this come under?" That which he did do was to investigate to find the meaning. This is always the method of the scientific man. Because he recognizes all phenomena as expressions of law, he is first of all after the law behind them. He cordially accepts as a sound scientific dogma the last part of the *Gloria Patri*: "As it was in the beginning, [it] is now, and ever more shall be, world without end."

Moses further taught the same reign of law as controlling in the moral realm. Over and over again he places all possible emphasis on the precepts, commandments, and judgments. This was done because God works along and over their lines of action for the spiritual betterment of men. This leaves no place for the wizards which did, and now do, mutter and

peep at some cave of Endor, nor for the refined humbugger of the Delphic oracle, nor for the present-day theologian who evolves the conditions of salvation from his social consciousness. The fullest statement of this truth is Psalm cix. This is the most beautiful lyric in existence on the universality and reliability of moral law, suffused with soul rest and emotion. The Jewish scholastic severely challenged Our Lord when, in a scientific way, he placed law above their opinions or traditions. They said He was overthrowing Moses and the prophets. His reply was clear and final: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." That is good science. Saint Paul was scientific in saying, though an angel from heaven should come and preach another gospel, he could not be received. As well talk of a new science of numbers, or a new formula for sulphuric acid. He contended that the gospel he preached was as old as God's effort to better men in character. It was preached aforetime to Abraham, who believed it, and his faith "was counted unto him for righteousness." He says that the Hebrews, in their days of desert discipline, "did all eat the same spiritual meat: and did all drink the same spiritual drink: (for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ)." The last judgment has received much opinionated treatment. Our Lord says: "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." This is good science, because the moral law goes unchanged through the eternal years. The judgment seat of Christ is among men to-day, and among them it will ever be.

The content and scope of catholic and scientific are the

same. They mean that in all things visible and invisible, God does His work along the lines of law.

Science deals only with facts and laws. The moment these are left, science is left, and the realm of opinion is entered. Scientific men have opinions, but in no sense at all are they considered authoritative. Facts and principles are the only material in the foundation and structure of science. The first ministers and preachers of the Church witnessed only to the redemptive acts of the Incarnate Life. The parting injunction of the risen Lord to the Twelve was, "Ye are witnesses of these things"—the things which were "not done in a corner." There was more than enough of religious opinion in the Jewish and pagan schools. To-day the phrase "the theology of Jesus" has become current. The record shows that all He had to do with religious opinion was to overthrow the traditions (opinions) of the Jewish theologians and to rebuke them for making the law of God of no effect by them.

Still further the scientific spirit and method of the Apostles and the early Church are brought out with clearness and strength in the formation of the Apostles' Creed. It originated at Jerusalem and was founded on the baptismal formula. Besides the speculations of the Jewish doctors, there were all sorts of religious notions derived from the many cults of the nature worshipers. The various imagined gods of the heathen temples had been defined. The God of all grace and forgiveness for all men, of Moses and Isaiah, had been reduced to a tribal deity. And so there was a real need that the One preached as the Saviour of men should be defined. In meeting this need, the Apostles and their immediate successors proceeded in a purely scientific way, which is, that character is known by its acts. It is a very simple

matter. How do we know John Blank? By the expression of his character. In all other than religious matters, this sound method is always followed. The method of pious metaphysical introspection would be regarded as bordering on mental unbalance by a board of business men seeking a fit man for a responsible position. It would be entirely scientific for them to ask divine aid in arriving at a satisfactory understanding of the character history of Mr. Blank; but to attempt to dig out of their social or commercial consciousness the defining acts of his character would be contrary to all the laws of personality and sound business principles. This method of defining the nature and character of the incarnate One by the redemptive acts of "the days of His flesh" was that of all the Hebrew prophets and teachers. The God of the fathers was known by the great and wonderful things He had done, and because of them should be loved and served.

Lord Bacon said: "The mind of man must work upon stuff." To furnish the stuff pertaining to the science of Christian character-building was the scientific purpose of the Apostles and their immediate successors in defining the nature and property of the Manifested Life. And so the Creed is the statement of the chief redemptive acts of this Life and the constructive principles which normally and logically come from them. In the sense that these redemptive acts furnish the stuff for all men to build into personal character, the Creed is catholic. In the sense that the only way to define and know character is by its manifested acts, it is scientific. Because it is both these, it has endured and will endure. Truth is brought out by contrast. The Continental Reformers of the sixteenth century gave little place to catholic antiquity. But they found themselves in need of religious

stuff for their followers to work into character; and so confessions of religious opinion came into existence with great frequency and length. Four centuries is not a long time for the working out of great religious questions; indeed, it is a short time compared with that which has been required for the settlement of great industrial and constitutional issues. The result is that these substitutes for "the faith once for all delivered" have fallen away, and are consigned to the junk heap of rejected religious opinions; while the scientifically constructed Apostles' Creed remains impregnable, and has a stronger hold on more believers to-day than ever before. The law looks after its own, never fear.

Can the doctrines defining the salvation of men be stated in the terms of law? Such a scientific statement gives them an enduring place in this and every other world of thought. A statement of all of them in this connection is outside its intent; that of one or two will be enough to cover the subject.

One law controlling moral beings in conditions of broken friendship is this: The terms of reconciliation and renewed personal contact must come from the person to whom injury has been done. This law, like every other, was not originated by a literature, nor is its continuance and power conditioned by a literature. This principle is fundamental in the Common Law; but the histories of its glorious victories through many centuries neither originate it nor are essential to its continuance in belting the world with social justice and equity. The Judge of all the earth has done right, now does right, and always will do right. His way is that of pleasantness and peace. Personal and social defeat have come to men because this way of thinking, feeling, and acting has been

left. Moreover, moral injury has come to the author and sustainer of the method of spiritual betterment. The remedy for the renewal of fellowship, in the nature of moral reality, must come from God.

Because God always accomplishes ends by means of laws, a law is involved in making men know the conditions of renewed friendship with Him. He is a person, and we are persons; the difference is that we are in this present realm of physical condition and life. Therefore He must come from the background of the spiritual into our present physical condition, and use the physical terms by which one human spirit communicates with another. There is one law controlling the coming of personality into this world from the background of mystery. It is universal and inexorable. The statement of the fact of this law is its sufficient presentation. Like every other fundamental principle, it is over and above argument, though discussion may proceed from it. We men, in our present physical limitations, can understand that Almighty God, "for us men and our salvation," should come down from heaven by the process of the Incarnation by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, *because that was in obedience to the law for the coming of all personality into this world.* That He could do so is over and beyond all our standards of measurement. We shall understand it when the mists have rolled away. It is literally true that here we see through a glass darkly; when we see Him face to face, we shall know all.

A critical word in passing: The intense discussion of the four Gospels has established their authenticity and genuineness as historical documents. This is helpful. The really essential critical point is this: Is the one central and originating fact of this literature presented as having been accomplished according to law? The conclusive answer is in

the Nicene Creed: "Who [Our Divine Lord] for us men and our salvation came down from heaven and was Incarnate of the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man." This literature postulates the reign of law and narrates that which took place in obedience to it. So that the really essential thing for those seeking to discredit it is to show that there is no such thing as the reign of law. When the last analysis has been made, the Incarnation and Virgin Birth rest on the presence and endurance of the law controlling the coming of personality into this world.

Another critical word: Any literature narrating anything done according to law is classed as scientific. The application of this truth to the record of the Manifested Life is plain. It is scientific, because—from first to last—it emphasizes in every possible way the presence of law and obedience to it.

There is one application of these positions to the matter of public teaching which may be helpful. The number of scientifically educated people is rapidly increasing. The involved method is supreme in all schools of sound learning. This great company of people think in its terms, and judge subjects by its standards. In every matter of instruction, they expect first of all, the statement of the involved law; their opinions they can form for themselves. It is noticeable that these intellectually strong people are not affiliating themselves largely with most forms of organized Christianity. They are not done with God any more than was Voltaire, when he left Paris after a hard and long fight with the scholastic theologians. He retired to Switzerland, and erected outside of Geneva—in a beautiful spot—a chapel, and put this inscription over the entrance, "Dedicated to God." An incident took place at a Lenten noonday service. The preacher had a distinct personal charm and earnestness. After the service

a young professional man of sound scientific training asked, "Would you tell me briefly what the preacher sought to teach? I did not understand his terms." They were largely those current in the religious schools of the Middle Ages. Accordingly he was brimful of opinions which were expressed in strong affirmations. To supposedly false opinions his own were zealously opposed; the fact that opinion is never more than an attempted explanation of ever living truth was quite left out. He had small conception of the fact that grace, faith, and sacrifice, in the very nature of moral reality, are fundamentally constructive laws in personal and social character-building. His argument was, — Because these are old, they are therefore true. As well argue that because the use of alcoholic drinks as intoxicants is as old as Noah, therefore this oldness gives them both value and commendation. Slavery is the world's oldest labor system, but this fact does not make it either true or desirable. The patriarchal condition was the first step in the evolution of government. It was entirely despotic. This antiquity of despotism is no proof at all that it should be accepted to-day. The man of science rises up in the strongest opposition to this assumption of the authority of antiquity. That which makes the doctrines of the Cross true to-day is the same living reason that made them true in the old time, and that ever-living reason is just what he wants to know. That is not a matter of opinion and is forever above it. The presentation of any subject in other terms he is unable to understand. It is an unknown tongue to him.

Another sermon was preached before a mixed congregation of various religious faiths. The word "sacramental" is distasteful to most *dissenting* people, because it is supposed to contain the germs of endless spiritual superstitions and

despotisms. But the sacramental principle was the theme of the sermon, though it was not once used. Beginning with a clear statement of the simple elemental facts of soul communicating with soul, the principle was traced, in a purely scientific way, up through the various zones of psychological life. He did not assert a single opinion; he did state facts and their governing laws, and showed how Our Lord always worked in obedience to them. As a matter of course, the conclusion and beautiful culmination was the living privilege believers have of having the gracious Saviour inflow Himself into their souls in the Holy Communion. All sorts and conditions of religious people in that congregation received a blessing, because the sermon was both catholic and scientific. A very real and living meaning was given to the petition, "That He may dwell in us and we in Him, and be filled with all heavenly benediction."

Another matter of great practical concern suggested by these conditions is that of securing strong university men for the Christian ministry. Their lack seems to be keenly felt in unexpected quarters. Many reasons have been given for the fact that they do not apply for Holy Orders. Probably there is truth in all of them, but it seems to have been overlooked that these men during four years of academic study have formed a system of thinking on the base lines of the scientific method. Over against this fact is the other one, that the intellectual atmosphere of the religious schools is quite apt to be inharmonious with that of Moses, the Prophet of Galilee, and Lord Bacon. From some it has been prohibited as a monstrous thing. More still, they hear religious leaders pronouncing that the glorious principles of the Cross have nothing in common with the scientific method. A strong revealing sidelight is thrown on the situation by the fact that

it is the quite united evidence of public librarians that books of theology are read in a very limited way. They occupy valuable space, and so refute the charge that the library is non-religious. As a rule they are conceived and born in the scholastic form, that is of opinion. As a matter of fact, the reading public was never so large as to-day, and it is hungry most of the time. But from forty years down, it is thinking in the terms of the scientific method in which it was educated and has become hardened. And so it has come to this: The seeking of Holy Orders carries with it the entire change of mental base and perspective, and it implies the meek acceptance of the despotism of opinion which is several centuries old. Strong university men refuse to do this, and so turn their trained powers to other activities. The God of their fathers is not thereby repudiated. Very far from it. But they are free to study with youthful enthusiasm all the laws of life and to give them expression in the living terms of to-day.

The whole matter is illustrated in the evolution of the great locomotives pulling at high speed transcontinental trains. The involved mechanical principles are the same as those of Stephenson's comet. The difference is that they have been given a fuller scientific expression, and so some great present-day needs are adequately met. The same is true of the principles of redeeming love. Among all sorts and conditions of men they are forever the same. The strong university man should know that he has the privilege of stating them in the terms of the living present. That means scientifically.

The scientifically educated person is sometimes criticized for indifference to religious things. It is true that he has very little interest in either sermons or books largely made

up of opinion. But he is all the time after the laws working out the destiny of the individual and of society. He does not profess to have measured these, but he does press on to the mark of the great prize of a more perfect knowledge of them. What is the method of approach to this large and rapidly growing class of most desirable people? That of Our Lord: the presentation of the glorious Gospel in the terms of the laws of His love, grace, and forgiveness.