

A Brief Introduction to the Development of Doctrine: According to the Mind of St. Thomas Aquinas

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Logic of Development, Page 25

The logical structure of the body of truths proposed for our salvation is a matter not only of interest but also of devotion, as appears from the writings of the classical scholastics, and not least those who might be termed high and dry. Cajetan is an eminent example; the virtuosity of his logic expresses the confidence that faith can enter the whole life of reasoning as charity can enter the whole life of loving. We have already remarked the same quality in St Thomas who does not, as it were, put on a church face when he turns from profane to sacred topics. It was the same confidence; *all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's*.

So the holy teaching, as we have seen, is composed of human elements. The question is, are they alien elements to divine revelation, additions to what has been given us, so that the product, the theological conclusion, is a hybrid of grace and nature, and the evolution of doctrine is transformist and heterogeneous? Or are these elements essentially contained in a single subject and a single situation, namely men together in the plan of God's saving mercy, so that the product runs true to type, namely nature uplifted by grace, and the evolution is homogeneous? The school of St Thomas adopts the second of these alternatives; in agreement grace and nature, like spirit and body, can combine in one. Neither at best represent pre-established harmonies that never really meet nor at worst antagonistic forces that fight it out on the battlefield of man.

Four parts may be distinguished in the complex body of truths proposed to us by the Church, namely a. the gift revealed in Scripture, to reject which is infidelity; b. the dogmas or articles of faith defined by the Church, to reject which is heresy; c. theological conclusions or necessary inferences from the truths of faith, the denial of which may be censured as erroneous; d. dogmatic facts, or that historical setting to theological statements which has to be accepted if these are to have any force, for instance that Jansenism really was found in the Augustinus, that Pius IX was a lawful pope, and that the First Vatican Council was ecumenical.