

Damnably Naturalism

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"I am a man. I stand on my own feet. I have a mind and a will and a sense of duty. I can lead a decent, even noble, life on the natural level, far above mere materialism. Now you as a Catholic come and tell me of a supernatural, superhuman life, superior to the natural life, requiring supernatural virtues to be lived. You tell me it is a life far superior to the natural life, made possible by an Incarnate God, and promising unimaginable bliss. Now that is all very well, but quite honestly, I find human nature is enough: the life of neither an angel nor a beast. I want neither the Heaven to come, nor the demands it makes here on earth. I decline the benefit with the burden. I will content myself with a decent natural life, that God will reward with a decent natural after-life."

That is how Cardinal Pie (1815–1880) put in the mouth of many an upright and respectable citizen of mid-19th century the grave error of naturalism, which was sending then, and has sent ever since, huge numbers of souls down to Hell. Naturalism is the denial, or as here, the refusal, of the whole supernatural order. Nature is all, or is all that I want. Nothing above nature exists, or if it does exist, I politely decline it. Leo XIII in his Encyclical denounced naturalism as being the essential error of Freemasonry (see *Humanum Genus*). Naturalism is the huge error of Hollywood, barely noticed because all of us have grown so used to the modern world as moulded by the Freemasons, one of whose principles is to be everywhere but to be seen nowhere. Cardinal Pie answered his respectable citizen with three arguments:—

Firstly, God is the Creator and the sovereign Lord of man, his creature. Having created the natural man who indeed belongs to the natural order (God's gift of the world to man), he

retained the right to perfect man by raising him also to the supernatural order (God's gift of God to man). In fact God did appoint man to enter the supernatural order, by an act of love which man has no right to refuse, because the gift and the love are so great. Thus God makes the benefit an obligation, under severe penalty for refusal of the benefit, and for revolt against the love. The nobility of participating in God's own nature by his gift of supernatural grace constitutes an obligation, such that he who refuses to behave like a son will be treated like a slave.

Secondly, reason itself proves that God revealed himself through his Son, Jesus Christ. If God reveals, I must see. Now his Incarnate Son revealed that to refuse to believe is to be condemned (Mk. XVI, 16). The Father has handed all judgment to the Son (Jn. V, 22-23). Every knee must bow to Jesus (Phil. II, 9-11). Every intelligence is to come under Jesus (II Cor. X, 4-6). All things are summed up in Jesus (Eph. I, 10-12; Heb. II, 8). There is no other name under Heaven than that of Jesus by which we can be saved (Acts, IV, 11-12). St Augustine on Jn. XV says, either one is attached to Christ like branch to vine and one bears fruit, or one is detached from him and is thrown into the fire. Vine or fire! You don't want the fire? Cling to the vine!

Thirdly, to lead a truly decent natural life without supernatural grace is impossible. Fallen man is weak in mind and will. In practice, the Cardinal asks, how many "decent and respectable citizens" without God's grace are capable of resisting all temptation? By day they behave decently in the office, but at night . . . ? They follow the noble Plato in public, but in private they follow the pleasure-seeking Epicurus. "Admit it, Sir," warns the Cardinal: "In men's eyes you may always have been very correct, but not in your own eyes, and if there is not a drop of Christ's Blood in your soul, you are heading for punishment."

Kyrie eleison.