

shall be condemned.' The Gospel, as we suppose, was sufficiently preached by one agency or another to these aboriginals whose case we are now considering, to make them culpable in rejecting a belief in the existence of God as a Remunerator, and accordingly they are guilty of a grievous sin of infidelity, which, if continued till death, will exclude them from salvation.

#### NEGATIVE INFIDELS.

Hence it is only with the other class, with those to whom no manifestation of the truths of faith has ever been made, that is with those who are called *negative* infidels, that we have to deal with in this paper.

Let us suppose, then, the case of persons who apparently have never had the opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of the existence of God as a Remunerator, and who, therefore, are inculpable in their infidelity, such as the aboriginals of this country were before Captain Cook set foot on Australian soil, or such as some tribes still are in the interior of Queensland. What are we to hold regarding their chances of salvation? Are they all, together with the millions who live in China, India, Japan, and other pagan countries, shut out from all hope of salvation? Has God provided no means of salvation for the great majority of the human race who are involuntarily and inculpably sitting in darkness and the shadow of death? The far-reaching mercy of God and the whole scope of revelation would forbid us to hold such a doctrine.

But before proceeding to examine the means which God has provided for their enlightenment and ultimate salvation, we may pause to consider whether the supposition of inculpable infidelity is a logical one or the existence of negative infidels is possible.

Some of the old schoolmen denied the possibility of inculpable or negative infidelity in adults, even for the shortest time after they arrive at the use of reason. Some others admitted it could exist for a short time, but not for a long period, and much less during a whole lifetime. They argued from many texts of Scripture, and, more particularly, from the second chapter of the first Epistle to Timothy, in which it is expressly stated that 'God wishes all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.' But God never proposes to men an end without giving the means of its accomplishment. As then, He wishes all men to be saved, He gives to all the means of acquiring that amount of supernatural faith which is necessary for salvation. If men, it was argued, use these means they come to a knowledge of the faith, and cease to be negative infidels. If they reject or neglect the means offered by God, then they become *positive* infidels. And so there appears to be no place for negative infidelity, no possibility of salvation, consequently, for any class of infidels. Again, according to the common opinion of theologians, God offers to each individual the means that are either proximately or remotely sufficient to lead to faith, and through faith to justification, and ultimately to salvation. Either these means are used or rejected. If used by an infidel, his infidelity disappears; if rejected, the infidelity in which he remains is no longer negative and inculpable, but positive and culpable.

Furthermore, a theologian axiom, 'Facienti quod in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam,' applies to infidels as well as to believers. The meaning of the axiom is that God never denies grace to those who do what is in their power to do. It, therefore, the infidel does what is in his power to do,

#### GOD WILL GIVE HIM THE LIGHT OF FAITH,

And he then ceases to be an infidel. If he omits to do what even as an infidel he is able and bound to do, namely, to observe the precepts of the Natural Law which are known to him, he then voluntarily places an obstacle to his own enlightenment, and he then ceases to be a *negative*, and becomes a *positive* infidel.

But notwithstanding this specious reasoning, the common opinion of theologians is that negative or inculpable infidelity can and does exist.

In solving the proposed difficulties, we must remember that though the infidel may sin grievously by violating the precepts of the Natural Law, which God has inscribed on the hearts of all men, and though he may thereby place an obstacle to his own enlightenment, still he may not be accountable for this consequence. The reason is, no effect which follows from the cause is voluntary or imputable unless the connection between the cause and the effect has been in some way foreseen. This is true even though the cause be sinful in itself, provided the effect was not foreseen when placing the sinful cause. In one word, there are two things required for the commission of a sin, namely, advertence on the part of the intellect, and consent on the part of the will. Now, it is possible that an infidel may violate the Natural Law without foreseeing that he is thereby placing an obstacle to his own enlightenment, and, therefore, though his violation of the Natural Law is voluntary and culpable, still the consequence of that violation may be inculpable. Just as, if a man were to offer a grievous insult to a person who was determined and prepared to bestow a great favor on him he would deprive himself of that intended favor, and still not be morally responsible for the deprivation if it were entirely unforeseen as the consequence of the insult. He would be responsible for the insult which was intended, but not for the consequence which we suppose he could not foresee. So, also, the infidel is responsible for the insult offered to God by the violation of the Natural Law, but not for the unforeseen obstacle which he thereby puts to his own enlightenment.

In interpreting the theological axiom referred to, 'God does not refuse grace to those who do what is in their power to do,' we must be careful to avoid the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian errors condemned in the Council of Trent. We are not, indeed, bound to hold that the axiom is to be understood of works performed with the aid of Divine grace, so that its meaning would be that those infidels who correspond with the first illuminating graces which God bestows on them, will be led step by step, first to faith, and then to sanctifying or habitual grace.

According to this view,

#### THE ORDER OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE

in the salvation of an infidel, would be as follows:—First, when an infidel arrives at the use of reason, he cannot fail to observe in the visible world about him, evident proofs of wonderful power, of admirable order, and of superhuman wisdom. His reason tells him that such effects could not exist without a sufficient cause, and that the Cause or Creator must be worthy of his worship. Then, God, by His actual grace, supernaturally enlightens his mind and moves his will to make further inquiry. If the infidel co-operates with this first grace, and seeks to know more perfectly the true God and the true religion in which He is to be worshipped, God will further aid him by His grace till he is brought to at least a knowledge of those articles of faith that are absolutely necessary for salvation. This God may do by sending missionaries to the country in which the infidel lives, or by bringing the infidel—by some apparent chance—under the influence of Christian teaching, or by a direct illumination of his mind. We do not presume to limit the means by which the Almighty may effect His purpose. We know that when the infidel corresponds with previous illuminating graces, there are a thousand means beyond our ken, by which God may lead him to a knowledge of the necessary articles of faith. Having the grace of faith, God will next lead him to the grace of justification, either through the Sacrament of Baptism, or by the baptism of desire—that is, by an act of perfect charity or contrition, in which the desire of Baptism is implicitly contained. After justification God gives the special graces that are required for perseverance, and thus in every stage of his salvation the axiom is verified: 'God does not deny grace to him who does what is in his power to do.'

If, on the other hand, the infidel should fail to correspond with any of these graces that are so many links in the golden chain intended to ultimately bind him to God, he may, without any violation of justice, or any want of mercy on God's part, be left in his infidelity or in his sin, and be lost. However, we may well believe that even after a first, and a second, and a third failure, God will continue to offer him, through life, the same graces that had been previously rejected, so that if he is ultimately lost, his destruction will be the work of his own wilful perversity.

But, as I have already said, we are not bound to limit the meaning of the axiom to works performed with the aid of grace. It may, without any taint of Pelagian error, be understood of purely natural works, thus:

#### GOD WISHES THE SALVATION OF ALL MEN

without distinction, and Christ died for all whom God the Father wishes to be saved. This wish on the part of God regards the present fallen state of human nature, and not merely as some erroneously held, the state of innocence and integrity in which Adam was created. It is a sincere and efficacious wish, in this sense, that God has not only prepared and provided the graces which, if applied, would be sufficient for the salvation of men, but He actually gives to each adult the means that are, proximately or remotely, sufficient to lead to faith, then to justification, and finally to salvation.

But neither this wish on the part of God, nor the efficacy of Christ's Passion—infinite as it was—excludes the necessity of some action, or of some co-operation, on the part of man in order that God's wish may be fulfilled, and that the merits of Christ's Passion may be applied to individual souls. This is what St. Augustine meant by saying that God Who made us without any act of our own, will not save us without our own co-operation.

The conditions required by God vary according to the various circumstances in which men are placed. In case of those who have no supernatural faith—of infidels—the condition required for their enlightenment is the observance of the primary precepts of the natural law. These precepts are written by God on the heart of every child of Adam, and are made known by the light of reason. 'For when the Gentiles,' says St. Paul, 'who have not the law, do by nature those things that are of the law; these having not the law are a law to themselves: who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them' (Rom. II., 14-15). It is true that the observance of these precepts is not a *cause* of justification. It does not entitle an infidel to the grace of faith. It only removes an obstacle which would prevent God from giving that grace. It is, in a word, a condition precedent, as the lawyers phrase it, required by God for giving the light of faith to an infidel. God has determined, according to a law of His providence, that those infidels who observe the primary principles of the Natural Law which are known to them, and the observance of which are within the range of their natural powers, and who thereby avoid placing an obstacle in the way of their own enlightenment, will infallibly be led to a knowledge of the true God, and at least to that amount of supernatural faith which is absolutely required for salvation.

Hence we are not to suppose that

#### THE OBSERVANCE OF THE NATURAL LAW

without the aid of graces is, in any sense, a meritorious cause of faith, nor even a disposition positively conducing to that end; but we are quite free to hold that it is a condition, with the observance of which God has connected the granting of the grace of faith.

Nor are we to suppose that this is a condition indispensably necessary; for while God never refuses the grace of faith to those infidels who by the observance of the Natural Law avoid placing an obstacle in the way of their enlightenment; on the other hand, He, in the exercise of His mercy, no doubt, often gives the grace of faith to those who have failed to observe the Natural Law, and who, therefore, have not even this negative recommendation in their favor.

How much of the Natural Law the infidel must observe, or how long he must observe it without the aid of grace before God gives