

HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY: 'A Programme of Christian Action' in accordance with Matt xxv, 35-36 (3½d. from 6r Darlington Street, East, Wigan).

IRENIKON (Sept.-Oct.): *What is a Latin?* Dom O. Rousseau continues an extremely important study on the origins, developments and characteristics of Latinism in the Church from the 'ecumenical' standpoint.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS is an excellent ten-cent magazine from Chestnut Hill College, Pa. December number includes Paul Hanly Furfey on *The Criteria of the Ideal Lay Life*, Georges Bernanos on *Poverty and the Gospel*, and Georges Goyau on *Sorel and Catholicism*.

SOWER (Jan.): *Uncomfortable Doctrines*: 'Presbyter' attacks the dangerous disregard of the Catholic Press for national mentality and sentiment.

PENGUIN.

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

CHRISTENDOMS NEW OR OLD?

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS

SIR,—St. Thomas says 'Grace presupposes Nature,' and he applies this principle constantly and fearlessly, as when, *e.g.*, he refers to 'a sufficiency of those bodily goods whose use is necessary for an act of virtue.' There is here the unmistakable note of something prior, something preliminary, something basic. Nature can exist without Grace, but it seems that in this order Grace cannot exist without Nature. I insist that it is a reasonable paraphrase of this principle to say that Grace is built on Nature. No reader would exclude from this image the notion of penetration, for any sound edifice has much more than a plane contact with its foundation. And no reader would deduce from my use of the image (or indeed from any part of my book) the mechanical notion which Fr. White has evolved from his inner consciousness. If such danger there were, it would be safeguarded by other passages, as at the preface and at greater length at the end of chapter two.

On the other hand, it seems that the image of inter-relation and inter-penetration preferred by Fr. White is definitely dan-

gerous, because it abstracts from that notion of the logical priority of Nature to which St. Thomas attached such importance.

If I used an image which seemed (and seems) to me best to express the mind of St. Thomas in non-technical form, rather than the other images showered upon me by Fr. White, it is because I was trying to follow St. Thomas.

I note that he does not deal with the more important parts of my letter, and that in particular he does not criticise the four points showing the incompatibility of Industrialism with Catholic philosophy. Can it be that he concurs? If so, I should be tempted to respond by adopting his suggested image of Spring and Resurrection, which would serve quite well (albeit on a non-Thomist basis) to illustrate the exact thesis of my book.

Yours faithfully,

H. ROBBINS.

Weeford Cottage,

Hill, Sutton Coldfield.

January 13th, 1939.

Father Victor White replies :

I fear that Mr. Robbins takes the implications of his 'superstructure' image more seriously than I had supposed. He appeals to St. Thomas. To St. Thomas he shall go.

Grace, St. Thomas teaches (IaIIæ. cx. 2), is not a substance, but an *accidens*, i.e. not a *quod* (like a superstructure) but a *quo*. It is, moreover, a *qualitas*, i.e. that *whereby* something is *qualis* (viz. Deo gratum). That which it thus 'qualifies' is the very essence of the soul (*ibid.* art. 4).

'Grace presupposes nature,' therefore, as an *accidens* presupposes its subject, i.e. as a *qualitas* presupposes that which it 'qualifies'; therefore, as act presupposes the potency which it actualises, not as one actuality (a superstructure) presupposes another actuality (the substructure). In other words, grace presupposes nature *materialiter*, not *formaliter* or *efficienter* (cf. *De Ver.* xxvii. 3).

'Grace perfects nature'; i.e. it is (as Penguin has pointed out elsewhere) grace itself which perfects nature, not nature which perfects itself for grace. Still less is the perfection of grace in human (as distinct from the angelic—cf. *Summa* I, lxii. 6) nature conditioned or measured by natural perfections, endowments or possessions.