

The Nature and Destiny of Man according to Fulgentius Bellelli ¹⁾

In our present work we pursue no other aim than to present an objective and impartial exposition of the doctrine of Bellelli

¹⁾ It is superfluous to introduce Fulgentius Bellelli to the modern reader, for he is one of the best-known Augustinians of the 18th century and is invariably mentioned in modern works with Cardinal Noris (d. 1704) and L. Berti (d. 1766). However, we insert here a brief biographical sketch to serve as a background to his doctrine which we are going to examine.

Fulgentius Bellelli was born of a well-to-do family in Buccini near Naples in the year 1675. At the age of sixteen he entered the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine. Soon after his noviciate he was sent to Suessa and then to Rome to pursue his studies. In 1695, he was made master of students at Siena. Shortly after, he went to Florence and in 1700 he was teaching philosophy in the Augustinian College in Rome. Two years later he returned to Siena as regent of the school there, and in 1704 we find him back in Naples. In 1710 he betook himself to Lucerne, Switzerland, and acted as theologian to the Papal Nuncio James Caracciolo. It was there that his first work: *Mens Augustini de statu creaturae rationalis ante lapsum* was published. After a year he was obliged to leave Lucerne for Milan on account of the climate. From 1713-1720 he filled the office of the head of studies in Venice, then in Perugia and finally in Rome. There he was elected secretary of the Order. Then Pope Clement XI made him procurator general of the Order and about the same time he also assumed the post of Prefect of the Bibliotheca Angelica. In 1727 he was at last promoted to be superior general of the Order at Perugia. When the six year term of office was over he returned to his cherished Bibliotheca Angelica in Roma, and there he spent his last years until his death in 1742. It was during this last period of his life of retirement that he wrote the *Mens Augustini de modo reparationis humanae naturae post lapsum*, which together with the work mentioned above forms one of the main sources of our work. His autograph letter dated 4th June 1717 is also of interest to us, but the principal ideas contained in it were embodied by Bellelli in his later work published in 1737.

For further details of his life see: J. F. OSSINGER, *Bibliotheca Augustiniana*, Ingolstadt, 1768, p. 118; H. HURTER, *Nomenclator*, Oeniponte, Vol. IV, 1910, col. 1371 to col. 1372; D. A. PERINI, *Bibliographia Augustiniana*, Florentia, 1929, Vol. I, p. 108 to p. 110; *Ency. Cattolica*, Roma, Vol. II, 1949, col. 1185.

regarding man's nature and destiny in the state of innocence, and to show the bearing which this doctrine exerts on that of the gratuity of the supernatural. In the course of this study some remarks will be found alongside with the texts of the author. They are there for the purpose of explaining and clarifying the mind of the author to the reader.

The general history of the subject in discussion is too well-known to the modern reader to be repeated here in detail, but we must describe briefly the circumstances in which Bellelli wrote. Since the time of Baius the subject of man's nature and destiny has been very much to the fore. The Scholastics who had for some time devoted themselves to the study of the subject from the metaphysical aspect, were not slow to make use of their findings to combat the error of Baianism. As this heresy denied the supernatural character of original justice and confused the natural order with that of the supernatural, they found no better way to defend the supernaturalism of original justice and to keep the two orders distinct than the recently developed theory of pure nature, which shows forth clearly that God could create rational creatures without the supernatural endowments with which the first man was favoured in the state of innocence.

On the other hand, the Augustinians who remained outside the current of thought of the later Scholastics, and who insisted on going back to St. Augustine and retained his « *status quaestionis* », did not think that the theory of pure nature was a correct way to refute the error of Baius. Remaining steadfast in their historical point of view they could not see the soundness of this new theory, or its usefulness ²⁾. The position of Baius was wrong. They had no doubt of it. But to them the position of these Scholastics was equally absurd by swinging to the opposite extreme. In order to refute Baius successfully it was not necessary to go so far as to affirm that a state deprived of a supernatural destiny and the help of grace, and moreover one afflicted with the miseries of death and concupiscence, was possible for man, the rational creature made to the very image of God. They thought that with the help of the classical distinction of « *Potentia Dei absoluta et ordinata* »

²⁾ A similar reaction to the Scholastic view can be found in the writings of some modern writers; e. g., in Rev. Fr. DE LUBAC's *Surnaturel*, Paris, 1946, Part I, Ch. 5 to Ch. 7.

it was possible to distinguish their position sufficiently from that of Baius and to safeguard the traditional doctrine of the gratuity of the supernatural. This in brief was the position of the Augustinians when Bellelli wrote ³⁾. He, ever faithful to the tradition of his theological school, tried in his turn to use his energy and genius to strengthen the position which he had inherited from his predecessors.

In our exposition of the doctrine of Bellelli we try to follow as closely as possible his development of thought. We first treat of his notion of man's nature as the image and likeness of God and of man's natural desire for beatitude; then, bring to light his idea of God's freedom and intention regarding the destiny of man; finally, study his doctrine of the gratuity of grace.

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The sources from which Bellelli draws his inspiration to build up his theory of man's nature ⁴⁾ are chiefly Sacred Scripture and the writings of St. Augustine. According to these, man was created to the image and likeness of God ⁵⁾, and in the state of happiness and peace ⁶⁾. Man, the rational creature, is the living and true image of God. He is the image of God because he can know and love Him. Being a living image he can have no other perfection and uprightness than the imitation of his Exemplar or Archetype, nor can he desire anything more ardently than this perfection and uprightness. If he is conformed to this perfection and uprightness, he becomes the true image ⁷⁾.

³⁾ For a comprehensive view of the Augustinian position on this subject we recommend to our reader the work of Rev. Fr. Leo RENWART, S. J., *Augustiniens du XVIII^e siècle et 'Nature Pure'*, Paris, Institut Catholique, 1948.

⁴⁾ Bellelli does not present his doctrine of man's nature and destiny in a systematic treatise; we find it scattered all over his works and have to make a synthesis from widespread references.

⁵⁾ *Genesis* 1, 26: « And God said, 'let us make man to our image and likeness' ».

⁶⁾ *Contra Julianum*, lib. 3, c. 11, n. 23, M. L., t. 44, col. 714: « ... non secundum illam felicitatem, ubi nihil erat in carne quod adversus spiritum concupisceret, et concupiscente adversus se spiritu frenaretur, quia in natura hominis ante peccatum pacem decebat esse, non bellum ». (N. B., M. L. stands for J. P. MIGNE, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina*, Paris).

⁷⁾ *Mens Augustini de statu creaturae rationalis ante peccatum*, Lucerne, 1711,

Therefore, continues Bellelli, the rational creature knows and loves himself rightly when he knows and loves himself as the image of God. In turn, he knows and loves himself correctly when he desires to be conformed to and united with his Exemplar, God ; because there is no true image which does not conform to the Exemplar, and there is no conformity except through love and knowledge. Not without cause, therefore, it is said: « like desires like ».

Further on Bellelli contrasts the temporal created image of God with the Eternal uncreated image of God. He asserts that, by the use of analogy, one can say that just as the most perfect Eternal Begotten Image is called Son of God, so the temporal image is to be called son of God, unless it is stained by sin. The former is indeed « Filius Dei naturalis », being of the same nature as God ; the latter is only « Filius Dei adoptivus » because it, being a creature, is of a different nature ⁸⁾.

The last sentence of the preceding paragraph is worthy of note, for it brings into focus the aspect from which our author considers

p. 392: « rationalis creatura Imago Dei est viva, et vera,... in eo dumtaxat imago est, quo potest Deum intelligere, et amare. Sed imago, quae viva est, nihil tamquam suam perfectionem et rectitudinem habere potest, nisi suum Exemplar, seu Archetypum unde expressa est; nihilque quit ardentius appetere, quam illam rectitudinem, cui si conformis est, revera Imago est... ».

From now on we shall use the *abbreviation*

A. P. for BELLELLI's *Mens Augustini de statu creaturae rationalis ante peccatum*, Lucerne, 1711.

M. R. for BELLELLI's *Mens Augustini de modo reparationis humanae naturae post lapsum*, Rome, 1737.

E. A. for BELLELLI's *Epistola seu opusculum Apologeticum d. Romae die 4 Junii an. 1717*. This manuscript is easily accessible in the now public library « Bibliotheca Angelica », Rome.

⁸⁾ A. P., p. 393: « Tunc ergo Creatura rationalis bene se novit, et bene se amat, quando se novit, et amat esse imaginem Dei, et tunc bene se novit, et amat esse imaginem Dei, quando appetit suam cum Deo Exemplari suo conformitatem, et conjunctionem; non enim potest esse imago, nisi Exemplari conformis sit, nec conformitas, nisi in amore, et cognitione esse potest... Simile autem sibi simile ardentius appetit ».

Ibid., p. 396: « Exindeque jam constat, quod si creatura rationalis imago Dei est, sicut illa perfectissima Imago Aeterna, et Genita Filius Dei aeternus dicitur, et ideo naturalis, quia ejusdem simplicis, perfectissimaeque naturae, ita servata analogia, haec temporalis imago Filius Dei dicenda sit, nisi culpa turpetur. Et quoniam non est ejusdem, sed *alienae naturae*, eo ipso quod facta est, ideo non naturalis, sed adoptivus dicatur ».

man's nature. In the context he contrasts the created nature of man with the uncreated nature of the Divine Word. Moreover, in the same context, man is already regarded as the adopted son of God by reason of his nature. The word « nature », if understood in the limited ontological sense would render the text unintelligible and even heretical. But nothing is further from the mind of Bellelli than to consider man's nature from the aspect of its metaphysical essence, as the Scholastics used to do in his own time, and as is commonly done among theologians of the present day.

One possible interpretation is that in this text Bellelli regards the created spiritual nature as something divine. This interpretation is not impossible in view of his Neoplatonic background and tendency. However, it is very improbable because, in spite of the emphasis he put on the dignity of the image of God and on the innate craving of the rational creature for the divine vision, of which we shall treat presently, he has never gone so far as to assert that man's spiritual nature belongs to a class of divine beings.

It seems to us that the simpler way of interpreting this text would be to say that Bellelli uses the word « nature » in the concrete historical sense, meaning the whole being as created by God in the beginning. In this sense « nature » includes not only body and soul, but also the prerogatives given to man from the very beginning of creation. It should not surprise us to find our author speaking in such a manner. As he draws his doctrine chiefly from St. Augustine, it is natural for us to find him retaining the terminology of his Master, who never considers nature purely in its metaphysical essence, or without reference either to sin or to grace. Nor can he define the notion of nature without referring to the divine Will ; because for him, all beings actually existing in the present universe cannot be explained unless by reference to God's free will ⁹⁾.

With this explanation it will be easier to understand the rest of Bellelli's doctrine on the image of God. After considering the temporal image as son of God by analogy, he passes on to the correlative concepts of Father and heredity. God the Exemplar,

⁹⁾ Cf. V. DE BROGLIE, *De fine ultimo humanae vitae*, Paris, 1948, p. 103, p. 175, and especially *Appendix I*, p. 229 seq.; also Etienne GILSON, *Introduction à l'étude de S. Augustin*, Paris, 1929, p. 185, note 3.

Who is at the same time « *Ars et Artifex ejusdem* », says Bellelli, is to be called Father, while the eternal vision of the Father is to be called the Patrimony or Heredity of the innocent created image. When the rational creature perfectly unites with his Exemplar by loving Him without change and being made one spirit with Him, he is then said « to reign with God », and the happy and eternal enjoyment of this reign is called « Eternal Kingdom ». Then will the image be perfect when it is perfectly united with God. Consequently the vision of God and the love by which the rational creature adheres to Him is called « eternal life »¹⁰).

From what we have seen so far, it is sufficiently clear that Bellelli retains the historical aspect throughout his study of man's nature as the image of God. In order to understand his doctrine correctly, it is essential to keep this point in mind, and also not to interpret his writings according to our modern technically precise distinctions and clearly defined terminology. But a question cannot fail to arise in the mind of the modern reader: was it legitimate to consider the nature of man under such an incomplete aspect and with such an imperfect terminology in the eighteenth century, after the controversy of Baius? Unfortunately this question never seemed to have occurred to the mind of Bellelli. For him, if St. Augustine could speak in such a manner, he also could do so.

Objectively speaking, one has to admit that the notion of man's nature as proposed by Bellelli involves nothing positively false. However, to affirm that a certain doctrine is not positively false, does not necessarily imply that the same doctrine is perfect and complete. On this, we think, everybody would agree. This point of doctrine which we have just reviewed looks very simple, and may even seem too simple to be worthy of noting. But we have no hesitation to say that it is an indispensable prerequisite for

¹⁰) A. P., p. 396: « Et Deus Exemplar, qui simul Ars est, et Artifex ejusdem, dicatur Pater; ipsiusque aeterna visio imaginis creatae innocentis dicatur *Patrimonium*, et *Hereditas*. Et quoniam dum Creatura rationalis suo exemplari perfecte jungitur, et in eo imperturbata quiescit, tunc nulli Creaturae servire potest, sed incommutabiliter Deum amando, unus cum eo efficitur spiritus, ideo cum Deo Regnare dicitur, ipsiusque beata sine fine fruitio aeternum *Regnum* nuncupatur. Et quia tunc imago perfecta est, quando cum Exemplari suo arctius constringitur, ideo Visio Dei, ipsiusque Amor, quo ei Creatura rationalis adhaeret Vita ipsius aeterna dicitur ».

a thorough understanding of our author's more intricate doctrine of the true beatitude and destiny of man.

Now we can turn to see how Bellelli builds up his doctrine of man's true beatitude on his notion of man as the image of God. Since man was created for happiness, and not for wretchedness and misery ¹¹), and being an image of God he ever tends to union and conformity with God his Exemplar ; it follows, in Bellelli's way of thinking, that God alone can be his last end, his true perfection, happiness, beatitude and rest ¹²). But God, adds our author, when considered as the final beatitude and rest of the rational creature, is not the God known by abstract cognition, but God as seen in the beatific vision ¹³). He adds this because a number of non-Augustinian theologians affirm that God could ordain the rational creature to a beatitude of the natural order, and to a vision which they called abstractive ¹⁴).

Bellelli, in conformity with all Catholic theologians, admits that the intuitive vision is in itself something supernatural ¹⁵). Nevertheless, he challenges the feasibility of a purely natural beatitude, one derived from abstract knowledge. He cannot see how it is possible for such a beatitude to be the true and perfect beatitude of the image of God. He strenuously asserts that the connatural

¹¹) *Ibid.*, p. 392: « Imago Dei utique propter aliquam felicitatem est condita; non enim misera, et propter miseriam condi potuit ».

¹²) *Ibid.*, p. 393, and p. 394: « Deus igitur solus, et nihil aliud, est vera perfectio, felicitas, beatitudo, et requies imaginis suae ». Cf. also p. 471.

¹³) *Ibid.*, p. 395: « Nec sufficit ad imaginis Dei quietem, et beatitudinem, ut dumtaxat ipsi conjungatur, cognitione, quae dicitur abstractiva ». And M. R., I, p. 223: « Numquid ut in abstractiva cognitione Summi Dei beata fiat ? Sed in cognitione abstractiva, quae auget visionis appetitum, stimulat desiderium, fovet possessionis aviditatem, quaenam requies, et Beatitudo poterit reperiri ? »

¹⁴) Cf. *Baianismus Redivivus*, pars II, art. II, parag. I, n. IV: « Quia autem Theologi Orthodoxi docent potuisse Deum ordinare creaturam rationalem in beatitudinem quamdam aliam a visione ipsius intuitiva, scilicet in beatitudinem ordinis naturalis, & visionem sui ipsius, quam Theologi vocant abstractivam,... ». This work was written by an anonymous author who is now generally identified as Joannes d'Yse de Saleon.

Berti notes the same fact in his *Augustinianum systema de gratia, ab iniqua Baiani et Janseniani erroris insimulatione vindicatum*, Bassano 1776, diss. 2, c. 3, parag. 6, p. 145, b. Both of these works are included in the *De Theologicis Disciplinis*, the chief work of Berti, published at Bassano, 1776, and also in the subsequent editions.

¹⁵) Cf. A. P., p. 378 and p. 379.

end of man is the beatific vision of God and not the beatitude derived from abstract knowledge. The reason he gives for his assertion is simply that man was so created that he was naturally the image of God, and that he would be miserable if he was prevented from being united with his Exemplar; in other words, if he was kept outside the intuitive vision of God and exiled from his Patrimony and Heredity ¹⁶). Divine providence cannot create His image as something in a state of misery ¹⁷). Abstract knowledge of God or analogical knowledge by species, according to Bellelli, only increases the rational creature's desire and longing after God instead of being his beatitude and rest. With the following illustration he tries to explain his point. Abstract knowledge is likened to a person who knows by a certain sign that his friend is hiding in a room, but he is prevented from seeing him or going to him. In such a case the knowledge is more an affliction than an enjoyment. It increases his discomfort instead of giving him rest ¹⁸). Then Bellelli concludes that the rational creature can be created only as the image of God, and can be perfectly conformed to God only when he comes to see Him in the intuitive vision ¹⁹).

From the above exposition it is sufficiently clear that Bellelli does not see the possibility, or rather the reasonableness, of distinguishing the two aspects under which man's beatitude and end can be considered: namely, the philosophical and the historical.

¹⁶) *Ibid.*, p. 397: « Cum ergo sit hominis ita constituta natura, ut naturaliter imago Dei sit, nec nisi in ipso Deo beata esse possit, et si a conjunctione cum exemplari suo impediatur, sit misera, magna ipsius poena, magnusque dolor est, si sempiterno mulctata exilio a regno suo, suoque Patrimonio... Hereditate... ». For the full meaning of Patrimony and heredity, see note 10 above. Also *ibid.*, p. 420: « Est natura ipsa sic condita ad Dei imaginem, quam proinde si Deo non jungatur, miseram esse necesse est; quapropter ipsa per se ipsam Deo indiget ut plene beata reddatur ».

¹⁷) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 418.

¹⁸) *Ibid.*, p. 395: « Cognitio abstractiva siquidem cum solummodo indiget Deum esse nec ipsius faciem aperiat, aptor est inquietitudini augendae, quam requiei inducendae; eo simili modo ac si quis aliquo signo certo dignoscat Amicum suum alicubi absconditum, quo tamen ipsum visurus, et amplexurus penetrare non possit; tunc certe non fruitione laetatur, sed privatione, et desiderio, et spe crescente affligitur, et inquietitudo magis augetur ».

¹⁹) *Ibid.*, p. 395: « Imago igitur Dei, quae rationalis creatura est, nec condi potest, nisi imago Dei sit, nunquam quieta, imo nec perfecte similis et conformis ei esse potest, nisi usque ad videndum exemplar suum pertingat ».

He is not the least concerned with such questions which haunt our modern mind: Is the metaphysical essence of man so constituted that God cannot but destine him to the intuitive vision? Why may not another end which is proper to and within the power of human nature be possible for man? On the other hand, Bellelli is preoccupied to show that the actual end of rational creatures is the vision of God and no other. Remaining in his historical point of view, he can see no other possible end for rational creatures than the beatific vision ²⁰).

So far we have observed Bellelli teaching that the intuitive vision of God is the connatural beatitude of man to which he aspires as his last perfection. Now we pass on to examine his position with regard to the kind of desire (appetitus) with which man tends to this vision.

The rational creature, says Bellelli, aspires to the vision not by a free and elicited desire but by an innate one ²¹). He, like Scotus and Soto, uses the term « elicited or free desire » in opposition to the « innate or natural desire ». The former is a freely elicited act that follows cognition; while the latter is a certain inclination of nature towards its perfection and is not an act that follows cognition ²²). Let us listen to his own words: « The innate appetite », says Bellelli, « is not a work or operation distinct

²⁰) In this place we limit ourselves to show what Bellelli considers as the true beatitude and end of man. Later we shall study the more important question as to what claim man has for that beatitude.

²¹) A. P., p. 395: « Atque id (visio) semper ardentius expetit, non libero, et elicito, sed innato appetitu ». And p. 411: « Respondeo duplicem esse appetitum, elicitem videlicet, et innatum, de elicito non disputamus; nihil enim in rem nostram facit sive appetat, sive non appetat homo eo appetitu beatitudinem suam. De innato dicimus prudentissimum, et connaturalissimum esse... ».

²²) SCOTUS, *In III Sent.*, d. 49, q. 10, n. 2 and n. 3 (Opera omnia, ed. Wadding, Paris, Vives, 1891-1894, XXI, 318): « Duplex est appetitus in voluntate, scilicet naturalis et liber. Naturalem solum dico potentiam voluntatis absolute, sed non aliquid superadditum voluntati; sicut enim quaelibet natura habet inclinationem naturalem ad suam perfectionem, sic etiam natura intellectualis, scilicet voluntas, habet naturalem inclinationem ad suam perfectionem; alius est appetitus liber, qui est velle liberum ».

« De primo appetitu dico, quod non est actus aliquis elicited a voluntate, sed tantum inclinatio quaedam ».

« De illo appetitu naturali, patet quod voluntas necessario et perpetuo et

from nature itself, but it is the very exigency, or better, the very need (*indigentia*) of nature; in other words, it is nature itself so constituted that if it is not united with God, it becomes miserable of necessity, and therefore it needs God that it may attain its beatitude »²³). In order to clarify his point he employs some examples: that of the « *materia prima* » which tends with an innate appetite to the « *forma* » for the satisfaction of its need, and that of the heavenly bodies for the moving spirits²⁴), also that of the organic body for the rational soul. These innate desires, notes Bellelli, are nothing else than the things themselves (*ipsas res*) which are in need of another and which are forced by their very nature to perfections which are congruous to themselves²⁵).

In the examples given by Bellelli, the « *tertium quid comparationis* » is the need of another to complete one's perfection. But does he merely use these examples as simple metaphorical illustrations or does he imply something more? The context seems to show that he employs them to connote more than a mere metaphorical illustration, i. e., he uses them as an « *analogia proportionitatis propriae* », though he may not be conscious that he is doing so. But since the innate desire of matter for its form implies a transcendental relation, as is also the desire of the body for the soul, the question which spontaneously arises is: does Bellelli

summe appetit beatitudinem, et hoc in particulari... Praeterea, illud 'appetere' non est actus sequens cognitionem,... ».

SORO, *In IV Sent.*, dist. XLIX, q. 2, a. 1: « Homini inest appetitus naturalis ad illam veram beatitudinem quae in Dei visione consistit; non dico appetitum elicited sed naturalem appetitum, hoc est, inclinationem naturalem et pondus naturae quo in finem illum propendet, sicut gravitas in lapide...; ».

²³) A. P., p. 420: « Appetitus vero innatus non est opus, vel operatio a natura ipsa discreta, sed est ipsa exigentia, vel potius *indigentia* naturae; verbo dicam: Est natura ipsa sic condita ad Dei imaginem, quam proinde, si Deo non coniungatur, miseram esse necesse est; quapropter ipsa per se ipsam Deo indiget ut plene beata reddatur ».

²⁴) This idea of the heavenly bodies being moved by spirits is based on an obsolete cosmology which was commonly followed by the ancient Scholastics.

²⁵) A. P., p. 420: « Ad cuius rei claritatem abs re non erit illis exemplis uti, quae plenis buccis Scholastici Philosophi jactant. Sicuti est illud de *Materia prima*, quae innato appetitu inclinatur ad formam expletivam *indigentiae* suae; et illud de caelestibus Orbibus, qui Spiritus moventes appetunt; et illud de corpore organico, quod rationalem mentem expetit. Signanterque notandum est tales appetitus nihil, nisi res ipsas sic indigentes, et egenas esse, quae in perfectiones sibi congruas suapte natura adiunguntur ».

have in mind to establish by these examples that the relation between the rational nature and the intuitive vision is also a transcendental relation ? It is hard to determine with absolute certainty what answer Bellelli would give to this question if it were put directly to him. But the passage which follows on the same page from which his examples are taken, and the explanation he gives for the possibility of the natural desire which we shall see immediately, seem to indicate that he has such a relation in mind.

Immediately after the examples he gives, he adds that the innate desire in the examples given above is not an indication of efficacy, but rather of need ²⁶). This shows that he is aware of the doctrine of some Scholastics on the transcendental relation. According to these theologians, if there was a transcendental relation between created intellect and vision, it would imply that the former is essentially relative to, and defined by, the latter. Bellelli has not explicitly used the term « transcendental relation », or gone into the subject of transcendental relation ; but very likely he does not think the doctrine of transcendental relation will involve any difficulty in the case of natural desire and vision. His reasoning proceeds in this manner: what is to be said concerning the relation of the separated soul and the body ? The relation between them, according to these theologians, is a transcendental relation, yet their reunion after death depends on the interference of an outside agent. He does not see why the same thing cannot be said of the human intellect and the vision of God. These are his own words: « It is not something novel or strange to find a subject possessing an innate natural appetite for an object which is beyond its reach and which it acquires only with external help. Take the example of the separated soul which naturally desires union with its body, or of matter in relation to its form. Neither of the two has the power to achieve their desire without the assistance of an outside agent. In like manner the natural innate appetite of man desires naturally the intuitive vision, not as something which it can attain by its own strength, but only provided outside help is given him » ²⁷).

²⁶) Cf. *ibidem*, p. 421.

²⁷) A. P., p. 412: « Nec mirum, nec novum esse debet, appetitum naturalem innatum aliquando inesse subjecto ad rem, cujus potentiam non habet consequendi sine externi adjutorii fulcimento. Quippe anima separata appetit naturaliter unionem ad corpus, et materia appetit formas, ut uno ore Peripatetici confitentur, nec tamen

From the reasoning of Bellelli just given above, it is sufficiently clear that he implicitly denies that there will be a confusion of the natural and supernatural orders or that the created intellect and the beatific vision are naturally proportioned to each another, the very consequence which his opponents (those who do not admit that man has a natural desire for the vision) assert will follow, by reason of the principle of specification, if the created intellect is essentially relative to the beatific vision. For Bellelli, the distinction of order, natural and supernatural, between the created intellect and the beatific vision is sufficiently kept as long as one admits the transcendence of the latter over the former in the line of efficient cause, « in linea causa efficientis ».

A similar doctrine was sponsored by Bellelli's apologist, Berti²⁸⁾, who further claims that it is the singular perfection of man to be able to tend naturally to an end which he can attain only by supernatural help. He says that there is not always a proportion between means and end. In the apology which he wrote for his former Superior General and for himself, he reasserts that it is not a disgrace to man but rather an honour that he naturally has a desire for an end which he cannot attain without supernatural help. It is precisely on account of this most exalted end to which man is ordained and whose attainment is beyond his natural strength that man excels the irrational substances²⁹⁾.

id valent assequi sine Agentis externi moventis, et disponentis adjutorio ». Cf. also pp. 420-421.

This example of the separated soul was commonly used by the Scotists in connection with the question of man's natural desire.

²⁸⁾ Berti's view on this point can be found in his *De Theologicis Disciplinis*, Bassano, 1776, lib. 3, cap. 1, tom I, p. 67, a: « At qui insitum hunc supernaturalis visionis appetitum propugnant, docent non posse expleri, nisi auxiliis gratiae rationalis substantia ad tantam finis sublimitatem evehatur. Videtur enim exemplo animae separatae, quae cum sit forma corporis, suapte natura illius appetit unionem, dari naturalem inclinationem ad terminum, qui solis inspectis naturae viribus nequit haberi, qualis utique est mortuorum resurrectio ». Cf. also *ibidem*, p. 326, b.

²⁹⁾ Cf. *Augustinum Systema de gratia*, diss. 2, c. 1, parag. 6, n. II, p. 130, b: « quum potius in hoc conditio creaturae intellectualis praecellat rebus aliis creatis, quod ordinetur ad perfectionem majorem illa, ad quam viribus propriis pertingere potest ». And p. 131, b: « in hoc proinde Angelorum, hominumque naturam irrationalibus corporeisque substantiis antecellere, quod illis constitutus sit finis praestantissimus, ad quem per solius naturae vires pertingere nequaquam possunt ». A similar idea can be found in the writings of St. Thomas, e. g., S. T. 1/2, q. 5, art. 5, ad 2.

Neither Bellelli nor his apologist has gone more deeply into the problem of innate desire. They have not developed the argument of Scotus based on the relation between man's intellect and its proper object, or between his will and beatitude in the concrete. It is quite certain that they were familiar with such arguments but it is impossible to know with certainty why they have not developed them. The explanation may be that they relied more on external authority than on metaphysical deduction. This also partly explains why they have chosen the Scotist tradition instead of that of the recent Thomists which was the more prevailing opinion at that time. It is true that the Scotist view is older and had been held for a long time by a number of Scholastics, and that St. Thomas himself, as they believed, had held a similar view. But the principal reason of their choice is to be found, we believe, in the fact that the Scotist view is more serviceable to their Augustinian system as a whole ; e. g., to serve as an argument for their theory of the impossibility of the state of pure nature ³⁰).

* * *

We arrive now at the second point of our study: *God's* freedom and intention regarding the destiny of man. Up to the present we have seen the doctrine of our author on the notion of the image of God as applied to man, and on man's true beatitude which is the intuitive vision of God. Regarding this Bellelli follows closely the general position of his theological school. In the second point we shall meet some original thinking of his own. We shall follow him step by step in his search for the reason why God created man with a rational nature, according to His image, and with an innate longing for divine communication.

Bellelli introduces his investigation with a brief survey of the concept of divine providence and of God's freedom regarding the elevation of man to a supernatural end. Following St. Thomas he defines providence as: the exemplar of the order of things towards an end, especially their last end, preexisting in the divine mind ³¹). Since providence pertains to the divine Will and Intellect, it must

³⁰) Cf. *ibidem*, diss. 2, c. 1, parag. 6, n. II, p. 131, b.

³¹) *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 22, art. 1, corpus: « Praeexistens in mente Divina ratio ordinis rerum in finem, et praecipue in finem ultimum ».

be free from any coercion and necessity. It must also be gratuitous³²). Under God's providence nothing is unforeseen or happens by chance, because no act of God can be such that it is without a preconceived plan and a preceding counsel³³). God's providence is known from His creation, because if God had not wished to reveal Himself to us it would have been impossible to know what He has planned and decreed from eternity. But now through the things which He has wrought outside Himself, it is possible to know the secret of His eternal providence³⁴). These few principles on God's providence and the way it is known to us should be kept constantly in mind, because Bellelli more often presupposes than expresses them in his following arguments.

Our author does make an attempt to safeguard God's freedom in regard to the ordering of man to supernatural beatitude. He maintains that God was not absolutely bound to ordain man to the supernatural end, because He was free not to institute the supernatural order or to create anything whatsoever³⁵). He could communicate the intuitive vision to His creatures by His antecedent will³⁶), but it is just as possible for Him not to do so³⁷); because no one can constrain Him to communicate Himself to His creature in such a way, and to create it according to His image, capable of receiving such communication³⁸). He could also make the creature to His own image, capable of Himself (capax

³²) M. R., I, p. 215, 222.

³³) *Ibidem*, p. 222.

³⁴) *Ibidem*, p. 205, 215.

³⁵) *Ibid.*, p. 224: « Ergone propterea debuit Deus creaturam Rationalem ad supernaturalem finem ordinare? Absolute quidem non debuit, quia talem ordinem minime instituere, et nihil extra se facere potuisset ». Cf. also E. A., parag. 6.

³⁶) « Antecedent » is used here in comparison with the act of creation. « Antecedent will » means here the will of God in regard to man's elevation which precedes His actual will of creating him. This concept of « antecedent will » only appears in his last work. It can be regarded as a development of his thought.

³⁷) M. R., p. 215: « Poterat Deus antecedenti voluntate velle se creaturae suae per faciei suae intuitum, Beatam fruitionem, possessionemque communicare; sicut poterat nolle ».

³⁸) *Ibid.*, p. 222: « Etenim quis Deum ut se rationali creaturae communicaret... seque ipsi per suimet manifestaret intuitum, faceretque eam sui imaginem, suique capacem, atque gratiam... adstrinxisset? »

sui)³⁹⁾, or He could make him in another manner, i. e., not according to His image, and not capable of Himself⁴⁰⁾.

From these statements we notice that Bellelli teaches that God is free, first, to communicate or not to communicate Himself supernaturally to His creature; secondly, to create or not to create anything outside Himself; and lastly to create rational creatures or to create irrational ones. In other words, it is sufficiently clear that Bellelli does not restrict God's freedom in creating creatures, and in the kinds of creatures He wishes to create. Nor does he deny the divine freedom regarding the destiny of His creatures, or the institution of the supernatural order. Under the aspect of God's freedom, it seems that Bellelli put creation from nothing and elevation to the supernatural on the same footing.

However, it is interesting to note that, according to Bellelli, if once God had freely decided by His antecedent will to destine His creatures to the intuitive vision and has created them accordingly, that is, with a spiritual nature capable of that sublime destiny and possessing in their nature an innate longing for the same, as has de facto happened; there is no sense in talking any more of God's freedom to ordain His rational creatures to any

³⁹⁾ The word «capable» (capax) needs a little attention here. Bellelli states that the rational creature which is made to the image of God is capable (capax) of the supernatural. (A. P., p. 449: «Cum tamen rationalis creatura, quae ad imaginem Dei facta est, ejusdem gratiae sit capax»). He also says frequently that God has made the rational creature according to His image, and capable of Himself. (M. R., I, p. 205: «Ad Dei Providentiam attendens, quae rationalem creaturam,... sui imaginem, suique capacem..., effinxit»; cf. also p. 216, 217, 224). This doctrine and terminology of Bellelli, is without doubt derived from St. Augustine, who says: «Eo quippe ipso imago est, quo ejus capax est, ejusque particeps esse potest» (*De Trin.*, lib. 14, c. 8; J. P. Migne, I. c., 42, 1044; quoted by Bellelli in A. P., p. 393). St. Augustine did not explain, as we would like him to have done, what kind of capacity he meant, positive or negative, active or passive. In another text he says that the grace of God cannot be given to stone, tree or beast, because they are incapable of it. (*Contra Jul.*, lib. 4, c. 3; J. P. Migne, I. c., 44, 7). The rational creature, who is the image of God is capable because he can know and love God. Bellelli, following the footstep of his Master, gives us no further explanation. Since he follows the Scotist tradition in this matter, we can justly conjecture that he has in mind the positive, but passive (cf. A. P., p. 419) capacity.

⁴⁰⁾ M. R., p. 216: «Quamquam creaturam suam alio modo non sui imaginem, suique capacem, sed sicuti pecora, ligna, vel lapides in pura, putaque corporea natura creare quivisset».

other destiny than the one He had in mind. It is therefore under this light that we must understand why Bellelli abstains from considering that freedom with which God could create rational creatures without an ordering to supernatural beatitude through intuitive vision of Himself, but with an ordering to natural beatitude through conceptual knowledge alone. He cannot admit the possibility of such a freedom. This in brief is Bellelli's concept of divine freedom.

Now we proceed to show how our author ascertains God's antecedent will from the things He has created. Bellelli, from the fact that God has freely created His creature with a rational and spiritual nature, according to His own image, and capable of possessing Himself, and not as stone, plant or beast which has no capacity for receiving His divine communication, concludes with the help of the principles regarding God's providence laid down above, that there preexisted in God an antecedent will of giving Himself to His rational creature to be its possession and beatitude. According to our way of thinking, says Bellelli, God's first will was to form a Holy Society or Heavenly Jerusalem with a pre-established number of places. Then, His second will was to create rational creatures to fill that determined number of places. In other words, His will of instituting the Heavenly Society preceded His will to create rational creatures ⁴¹).

Bellelli, in order to illustrate his point, gives the example of a potter who wishes to make a certain vase for his own use. He does not make it blindly without any aim, but with the express purpose of filling it with something. Therefore, from the means he chooses to accomplish his work, the aim or intention he has in mind is revealed to us. With much more reason, according to

⁴¹) *Ibid.*, p. 215: « Quod autem in Deo antecedens ea voluntas sic se communicandi possidendum praeexisterit; nostroque concipiendi modo prima voluntas formandi sanctam societatem, seu supernam Civitatem Jerusalem, totque, et non plures in ea mansiones, sedesque statuendi, numero scilicet locorum praedefinito, voluntatem alteram condendi Rationalem Creaturam antecesserit, in argumento est, quod Spiritualem Rationalemque Creaturam, Angelicam scilicet, et Humanam, imaginem suam immortalem, non sicuti pecora, ligna, aut saxa, sed sui capacem tamquam vas grande, vacuum, egenumque, atque ad summam increati Boni plenitudinem inhians condiderit ». Cf. also p. 225, and E. A., parag. 6.

Bellelli, we can say that God, the most wise and prudent Maker of all things, had an intention of communicating Himself to His creature before He created it. Because if He had not this intention He would not have created it with a spiritual and immortal nature, according to His image and capable of receiving Himself ; He would have created it in another manner, that is, not according to His image and without any capacity of receiving spiritual communication, as He was indeed perfectly free to do ⁴²⁾. Bellelli is persuaded that it would be something unthinkable, in the light of God's wisdom, that God should will to create immortal images capable of receiving Himself without a previous intention of communicating Himself to them. Such manner of acting, in Bellelli's mind, would be inordinate, unjust, and unworthy of any intelligent artist, and a fortiori of God, the most perfect and wise Creator and Provisor of the whole universe ⁴³⁾. He repeats the same argument frequently in order to accentuate his point. Then

⁴²⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 216: « Namque si figulus in suae domus usum vas aliquod magnae capacitatis effingat, prudenterque ex consilio, non casu, et inopinate operetur, laborare eundem ex praeintento fine aliquid in eo reponendi, quis non conjiciat ? Media siquidem electa finis intentionem patefaciunt. Quanto igitur jure potiori in Deo Sapientissimo, et Providentissimo fingente in usum Sanctae suae Civitatis Jerusalem imaginem suam, suique capacem, voluntatem antecedentem, seu intentionem se eidem communicandi, ad sedemque domicilii Caelestis evehendi, si innocens perseverasset, fatendum est praecessisse ? Etenim si intentio illa non praecessisset, nec imaginem spiritalem finxisset, immortalem, suique capacem. Quamquam creaturam suam alio modo non sui imaginem, suique capacem, sed sicuti pecora, ligna, vel lapides in pura, putaque corporea natura creare quivisset ». And p. 222: « Sed quoniam haec suppositio, quatenus a nobis juxta Augustini mentem defenditur, voluntatem creandi rationalem Creaturam antecedit, non autem ad eandem subsequitur,... Nam si illa gratuita superni finis voluntas se communicandi Creaturae in Deo non praecessisset, neque Creaturam Rationalem Immortalem, sui imaginem, suique capacem, condere potuisset ».

⁴³⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 222: « Etenim qua Providentia statui potest, ut Deus in volendo ordinatissimus, Innocentem, Immortalemque imaginem sui capacem creare velit, absque se illi communicandi intentione ? Appareret nimirum in hac hypothesi manifesta inordinatio in Artifice, creando Innocentem, et capacem sui imaginem, cujus aviditati, indigentiaeque explendae ipse solus suomet Bono summo sufficeret, eique nihilominus communicare esse nollet. Namque si se communicare non vult, cur creat capacem sui egenam, et avidam ? Si autem Innocentem illam, capacem, egenam, Immortalem, suique avidam creat, cur se eidem non communicare, ejusque sui vultus intuitu indigentiam non explere constituerat ? Propter quid enim Innocentem illam tantae capacitatis et aviditatis effinxit ? Quo fine ? Qua intentione ? »

he adds: just as the grace of final perseverance is an argument for the existence of predestination, so also the creature's capacity for possessing God Himself is an argument of God's antecedent will to beatify His creature ⁴⁴).

These statements of Bellelli which we have just seen show us how closely his doctrine of the antecedent will of God is linked up with his notion of man's nature and ultimate beatitude. His doctrine of God's antecedent will would have no meaning if our author had not presupposed the fact that the only end connatural to rational creatures was the intuitive vision, outside of which they would certainly be miserable. Otherwise, how could he say that if God had not a previous intention of communicating Himself to His creatures, it would be inordinate and unjust for Him to create creatures with a rational nature and according to His image? Consequently, we are obliged to repeat again the warning that in order to understand him correctly we must try to see things from his point of view; that is, to interpret his doctrine of man's nature and destiny in the historical order of things. If someone had questioned him as to what objective value he thought his doctrine possessed when it was weighed in the scale of metaphysics, he would have answered that he had not any interest in metaphysics and that he preferred to keep to the historical consideration whose usage has been sanctioned by the Fathers and theologians throughout the centuries. It is difficult for him to see why he should yield to a comparatively new way of thinking, that is, to consider the subject from a purely metaphysical point of view, which he has a tendency to distrust ⁴⁵).

⁴⁴) *Ibid.*, p. 216: « Ut enim adiutorium finis perseverantiae Praedestinationis argumentum est, ita capacitas imaginis suae ut Deum ipsum Divino suffulta adiutorio possideat, argumentum est antecedentis Providentiae, eamque Beatificandi antecedentis voluntatis ».

⁴⁵) Bellelli's attitude towards philosophy may be gathered from the remarks he makes in A. P., p. 28: « Haec profecto portenta sunt, in quae homines trahit nimius inutilium doctrinarum amor, futilium distinctionum indagatio, Philosophiaeque Gentilium studium prolixius ». Bellelli has in mind here the Scholastic distinction that regards grace as the principium radicale *quod* sanctitatis, and charity the principium *quo*. And in p. 275: « Difficiliorem mox aleam subituri sumus, cum obscurissimas Metaphysicarum argumentationum latebras, densissimas in Augustinianam doctrinam tenebras offundentes, introire cogitamus ». In these texts he betrays a certain repugnance towards metaphysics.

Before we conclude our study of man's destiny, a few words must be said on Bellelli's idea of man's actual elevation to the supernatural end. When speaking of the naturalness of elevation (*naturalitas elevationis*) Bellelli makes a distinction between elevation to the end (*elevatio ad finem*), and elevation to the means (*elevatio ad medium*).

Elevation to the end, according to Bellelli, belongs to man's rational nature which is the image of God and which can rest in no other object than God Himself ⁴⁶⁾, for in this very rational nature he sees a remote right to the intuitive vision ⁴⁷⁾. From this statement it is evident that our author does not admit that the elevation of man to the supernatural order implies the assignment of a *new end* to him, but rather the conferring of grace by which man can attain the intuitive vision. In other words, the term « *superadditus* » is not to be used in connection with man's destiny, but only in relation to grace, the means he needs to attain his sublime destiny.

Man's actual elevation to supernatural beatitude is always regarded by Bellelli as an absolute reality and not as a supposition. In his first work he gives an exposition of this point. In chapter IX, he affirms that St. Augustine did not simply suppose that man was elevated to a supernatural end, but he regarded man's elevation as a real state. According to Bellelli, all modern Scholastics think that S. Augustine spoke with the supposition that man was ordained to the supernatural end. With this supposition, they also

⁴⁶⁾ A. P., p. 415: « De naturalitate autem Elevationis est distinguendum. Nam Elevatio alia est ad finem nobilissimum, alia autem ad media, quibus est comparandus: Illa ad naturam ipsam pertinet, quae imago Dei est, et in nullo, nisi in Dei possessione esse quieta. Quapropter natura ad illum finem elevata dicitur eo ipso quod excellentioris ordinis supra corpora, et infra Deum ad ipsius imaginem et similitudinem condita est ».

⁴⁷⁾ In order to understand this clause we have to recall once more to our mind Bellelli's notion of man's nature. He sees in the spiritual nature something more than what most theologians are accustomed to see in it today. He sees in the rational nature a hidden significance, an excellence, and the very sign of God's will to elevate man. It is because God had the intention to elevate His creature that He created him with such a nature. For this reason he calls the spiritual nature the remote right to the beatific vision. Cf. A. P., p. 468: « Jus radicale ad aeternam vitam duplex distinguendum, remotum et proximum. Remotum ipsa natura rationalis, et Dei imago, quae nequit recte, nisi in ipso Deo requiem... reperire ».

agree that the vision of God would be due to the creature so elevated, and consequently it would be unjust to deprive an innocent creature of it ⁴⁸).

To the above opinion of the modern Scholastics Bellelli offers the following answer: « The Pelagians, with whom St. Augustine had to deal, also denied that man was gratuitously elevated to the supernatural end. If St. Augustine had only supposed the elevation of man, the whole of his argument would have no value. It would be just begging the question (*petitio principii*). St. Augustine in his works against Pelagianism did not simply suppose man's elevation to the supernatural end but contended that it was the true state of man who could have no other end than the happy possession of God Himself » ⁴⁹). In his autograph letter written a few years later, Bellelli restates his view more strongly ⁵⁰).

Concerning elevation to the means (*elevatio ad medium*), Bellelli teaches that because the beatitude befitting the image of God is so exalted, it cannot be attained without supernatural help. This help consists chiefly in the grace of adoption through which man becomes the partaker of the divine nature. But besides the grace of adoption actual grace is also necessary. Consequently, in regard to the existence and need of both habitual and actual graces the doctrine of Bellelli causes no difficulty. What concerns us from now on is to find out the exact teaching of our author on the

⁴⁸) A. P., p. 409: « Ut huic Augustinianae Demonstrationi Moderni Scholastici faciant satis, omnes in unam responsionem conspirant. Ea autem est, Augustinum loqui in suppositione elevationis creaturae rationalis ad finem supernaturalem. Qua facta suppositione certum est, ajunt, claram Dei visionem debitam esse creaturae sic elevatae, proindeque optimo jure injustus proclamaretur, si absque praevia culpa innocenti creaturae eandem denegaret ».

⁴⁹) *Ibid.*, p. 409: « Numquam enim Pelagiani praecipui hostes gratiae Dei, qui solam naturam ad dona gratiae promerenda sufficientissimam contendebant, elevationem gratuitam ad finem supernaturalem confessi sunt. Imo vero hoc erat, quod tamquam capitale dogma errori suo oppositum aversabantur. Igitur si Augustinus innixus tali suppositione arma strinxisset, inepte prorsus, et inaniter aerem verberasset puerili, et fallaci omnino argumento. Quandoquidem id supposuisset, quod erat in quaestione, quodque absolute ei probandum fuisset. Atque ita argumentum Augustini palmaris esset *petitio principii*. Quis hoc non videat in regulis Logicae vel mediocriter versatus? Non igitur facta illa suppositione argumentatus est Augustinus, sed illum esse statum absolutum rationalis creaturae contendebat, ut aut omnino non sit, aut si sit, non possit alium finem habere nisi beatam Dei ipsius possessionem ».

⁵⁰) Cf. E. A., parag. 7.

gratuity of this means which is absolutely necessary for man to attain his final beatitude, and which Bellelli admits explicitly to be something added (*adjuncta*) to nature and not to be considered as natural ⁵¹).

* * *

Finally we come to touch upon the last but most interesting subject of our study: The *gratuity of grace*.

If it is true, as Bellelli teaches, that God had intended to ordain man to the intuitive vision before He intended to create him, and that He has *de facto* elevated man to that exalted end, and since man cannot attain that sublime end by his own strength, it seems logical for him to conclude that the necessary means which God in His Providence has provided for man in order that he may attain his end, is in a certain sense due to him. We are now going to examine in what sense, according to the mind of our author, is this means due to man, and why it is due to him.

It is beyond doubt or dispute that Bellelli teaches that grace is due to rational creatures in the state of innocence ⁵²). Our immediate objective is to ascertain what is his teaching in respect to the reason why grace is due to rational creatures and the manner in which it is due. To attain this objective a preli-

⁵¹) A. P., p. 451: « Sed quoniam beatitudinem tam excellentem magnitudini, & capacitati Imaginis Dei congruentem, adipisci mens creata non potest sine supernaturali adjutorio, castoque amore, quo Deo adhaerens, in ipsius adoptionem Filiorum collocetur,... hinc est, quod elevatio ad media naturalis Creaturae dicenda non est, cum sit gratia naturae adjuncta. Et de hac elevatione, quae scilicet per gratiam filiorum habetur, quae homines Divinae Naturae consortes, & participes efficit,... ». And p. 471: « Et aliunde adoptio est medium necessarium omnino ad hanc adipiscendam felicitatem, quo nimirum amoto, in omnem rationalis creatura rueret miseriam, & immunditiam;... Ad id, quod additur respondemus, gratiam adoptionis, etsi necessariam, non tamen solam sufficere pro aeterni Regni adeptione. Necessaria est insuper perseverentia finalis, quae... in statu innocentiae cum versatili adjutorio a libero descendebat arbitrio » (N. B. in the Augustinian terminology 'adjutorium versatile' is equivalent to actual grace).

⁵²) We insert here the expression « in the state of innocence », because according to Bellelli rational creatures were given certain privileges or claims on account of their nature and destiny. But by their first Fall they forfeited them and consequently God can *justly* deprive them of these privileges. The difference between the state of innocence and the state after the Fall is constantly and sharply kept in the writings of Bellelli on the subject of grace.

minary inquiry into the peculiar meaning which he attaches to the terms « debitum » and « supernaturale » is absolutely indispensable.

In reading through Bellelli's works one cannot avoid noticing that he is very careful to point out the difference between the meaning of the « debitum » as intended by him, and the other meaning, which would give his doctrine a heretical connotation. Almost in every passage where the word « debitum » appears he gives the two meanings side by side. « Debitum » according to him can be understood in two ways: First, as something due to the intrinsic demands of nature; for example, that which is part of nature, or that which flows from nature, is regarded by Bellelli as due (debitum) in this first sense. This debitum is known in his writings either as « debitum rigorosum » or « debitum naturae secundum se ». Second, debitum can be taken as that which is due on account of God's law of providence, and it will be known as « debitum congruitatis Dei » for the time being⁵³). On account of the important part it plays in the doctrine of Bellelli, a special study will be devoted to it presently.

This way of distinguishing « debitum » is not entirely of Bellelli's own invention. Similar usage can be found throughout the centuries in one form or another. The more common one is the

⁵³) Take for example A. P., p. 455: « Non enim gratia illa (gratia Conditoris, that is, grace given to innocent man) ita debita fuit naturae, ut aliquod opus meritum eandem praecesserit, aut sicut naturae sunt debita ejusdem proprietates, quae ex ejusdem visceribus enascuntur. Sed debita fuit ex lege Providentiae Divinae ». *Ibidem*, p. 468: « Deinde libenter fatemur, gratiam Conditoris esse indebitam naturam secundum se, sed dicimus, esse ipsi debitam, prout stat sub ejusdem rectissima Providentia, ... ». And p. 472: « ... ut asserent, Deum debuisse rationali Creaturae dona gratiae suae elargiri, non debito rigoro, sed ex pura puta decetia, ... At puto, eruditissimum Norisium illam puram putam decetiam eo sensu accepisse, ut dumtaxat debitum ex intimis naturae natum praecise, & secundum se, & non prout sub Providentia justissima Conditoris, exclusum innueret ».

Also E. A., parag. 7: « Debuit inquam non naturae intimae ordinationi et rectitudini secundum se praecise, ... sed debuit providentiae sui aut certe naturae quatenus sub tali providentia constitutae ».

Finally M. R., I, p. 221: « Respondeo aequivocum verbum debet esse distinctione exponendum. Naturae enim gratiam Deus non debet tamquam proprietatem ex ipsa nascentem, vel ejusdem praecedenti merito tribuendam: debet vero gratiam naturae sub gratuita Providentiae legibus ». For the expression « debitum congruitatis » see A. P., III, ch. XXI.

concept of the « *decentia Dei* », or the consideration of something under the aspect of the Providence of God. Furthermore the application of the notion of « *decentia Dei* » to the question of « *debitum* » was already made by Giles of Rome (d. 1306). He carefully distinguished « *debitum ex decentia* », which he regarded as not repugnant to grace, and « *debitum simpliciter et absolute* », which he considered as contradictory to the true character of grace (*ratio gratiae*)⁵⁴). The more immediate sources from which Bellelli draws his inspiration for his distinction of *debitum* are the writings of Noris (d. 1704), Fulgent La Fosse (d. 1672), and J. Schweitzer (d. 1708), who were all Augustinians, his near contemporaries. Noris, in his explanation of St. Augustine's text, *Cont. Julianum*, lib. 3, cap. 11, distinguished « *debitum rigorosum* » from « *debitum ex pura decentia* »⁵⁵). La Fosse made a twofold distinction of justice: « *justitia condignitatis* » and « *justitia decentiae et congruitatis* »⁵⁶). Schweitzer divided « *debitum integritatis* » into that which is under divine providence, and that which is according to the intrinsic principle of a thing⁵⁷).

Bellelli in his turn explains « *debitum congruitatis Dei* » in the following manner: he says that this *debitum* is something between « *debitum rigorosum* » and « *pura decentia* ». The former implies strict necessity, and is due absolutely and simply, as explained above. The latter, on the other hand, implies no necessity at all. The classical example to illustrate « *pura decentia* » is the Incar-

⁵⁴) *In II Sent.*, d. 30, q. 1, a. 1; and d. 31, q. 1, a. 1, Venetiis, 1581, pp. 408, 409.

⁵⁵) *Vindiciae Augustinianae*, Patavii, 1708, cap. 3, parag. 2, p. 17, a. Later Bellelli explains what Noris meant by the expression « *pura puta decentia* » in his *A. P.*, p. 472, where he holds that Noris has in mind the same implication as his « *debitum congruitatis* ». See also p. 465.

⁵⁶) *Augustinus Theologus*, Tolosae, 1680, t. 3, p. 45 and p. 51: « *est autem duplex justitia, altera condignitatis altera vero decentiae et congruitatis... Justitia decentiae et congruitatis est ea secundum quam Deum tribuit unicuique secundum quod decet suae bonitati sapientiae et providentiae, quamquam illud simpliciter et absolute non debeat, ut posset illud denegare sine injustitia simpliciter dicta...* ».

⁵⁷) J. SCHWEITZER in his *Diss. de prima hominis innocentia*, dubio 11, ad 9, distinguished *debitum integritatis* as follows: « *Si spectetur homo prout substat divinae gubernationi, concedo; si spectetur praecise secundum principia intrinseca, nego. Potest aliquid debere naturae humanae prout subjicitur divinae providentiae et gubernationi, quod illi non debetur tamquam proprietas, si spectetur praecise secundum sua principia intrinseca* ».

nation. It is apposite and congruous for the Divine Word to take our human nature, but its contrary, that is, not to take our human nature, is possible and just as congruous.

The « *debitum congruitatis* » midway between « *debitum rigorosum* » and « *pura decentia* » is further explained by Bellelli in this manner: « *Debitum congruitatis* » unlike « *pura decentia* » does not admit the possibility of its opposite, and out of it a certain *spontaneous necessity* arises⁵⁸). It is like the obligation springing from a promise made by God. If once it is supposed that God has made a promise, He is bound (*tenetur ex fidelitate*) to fulfil His promise⁵⁹). Our author has also another name for the same *debitum*, and that is: « *debitum conditionatum* », because it is not absolute, but rather depends on God's good pleasure⁶⁰). Indeed, God is in no way bound to make a promise, but He promises freely out of His own good pleasure. Then another important name he gives to denote the same *debitum* is « *debitum ex lege Providentiae* », because according to him God is bound by this *debitum* to give to His creatures all means necessary to attain their last end⁶¹). This personal explanation given by Bellelli of « *debitum congruitatis Dei* » should be kept in mind, and his doctrine on the gratuity of grace given below is to be understood according to this explanation of his⁶²).

⁵⁸) A. P., p. 472: « Nimirum quoniam decens est, quod pro arbitrio fit ab eo, qui plenam potestatem habet quodlibet, et oppositum faciendi... Hoc quidem pacto congruum, et decens fuit, ut Verbum naturam humanam assumeret, quam si assumere nolisset, ut reapse potuit, etiam id decentissimum fuisset... »

Alio autem modo decens est ut fiat, quod et aliter fieri non potest, quodque etiam spontanea fit necessitate. Sicuti decens est ut Deus fidelis sit, nec promissis suis deficere possit... ».

⁵⁹) A. P., p. 450: « quod (gratia) potest esse debita ex aliqua suppositione, absque eo quod desinat esse gratia. Exempli causa: Facta suppositione, quod Deus promittat dare gratiam suam, ut reapse illam Electis, & Vocatis secundum propositum promittit; in hac hypothese Deus tenetur ex fidelitate promissa sua adimplere, nec aliter contingere potest ».

A. P., p. 474: « sed non proinde quia hoc decet, & congruit, debitum fidelitatis, quo Deus sibi ipsi arcto nexu tenetur, jota vel unum minuitur, sed aequae, & in omni prorsus debiti rigore perseverat ». Cf. also M. R., II, p. 101.

⁶⁰) Cf. A. P., p. 459, and M. R., I, p. 222.

⁶¹) Cf. A. P., pp. 458, 465; and M. R., I, p. 214.

⁶²) We wish to remark here that the modern Augustinians do not use the expression « *decentia Dei* » as strongly as Bellelli uses « *debitum congruitatis* ». They do not teach that a spontaneous necessity arises from it. They only regard

Then we come to the term « *supernaturale* »⁶³). Belleli, like all Catholic theologians, wants to maintain the distinction of the two orders: natural and supernatural⁶⁴). But the way he distinguishes nature from the supernatural is not exactly the same as that of the theologians of the other schools. For our author the supernatural is defined principally by opposition to the powers of nature (*vires naturae*). If something exceeds the powers of nature, it is regarded as supernatural. He also defines the supernatural by opposition to that which constitutes nature or flows from nature⁶⁵). In other words, in order that a thing be supernatural, it must exceed the powers of nature, it must not be something which constitutes nature, and it must also not be something which flows out of nature.

However, we cannot avoid noticing that our author has deliberately omitted the consideration of the exigencies of nature (*exigentiae naturae*). By exigencies of nature we mean whatever is necessary or suitable for the existence of a thing, or for its development, or for the attainment of its final end. Once more our author prefers the Scotist position⁶⁶) to the one proposed by

its opposite as inconvenient or incongruous but not as impossible. Yet they consider it as more than a mere « *ratio convenientiae* » whose opposite does not involve the least incongruity. Cf. Rev. A. TRAPÈ, O. E. S. A., *De gratuitate ordinis supernaturalis apud theologos Augustinenses litteris encyclicis 'Humani Generis' praelucentibus* (Ex *Analectis Augustinianis*, vol. XXI, n. III), pp. 248, 249.

⁶³) The historical evolution of the term « *supernaturale* » has been treated in quite a number of modern works; e. g., E. B. BRUEGGEMAN, *Modern thought on the Supernatural*, *Theological studies*, VI (1945), pp. 3-34, and DE LUBAC, *Remarques sur l'histoire du mot 'surnaturel'*, *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXI (1934), pp. 225-250, 350-370, and later in his book *Surnaturel*, Paris, 1946, Part III.

⁶⁴) Cf. M. R., II, p. 97: « *Perperam Adami gratia sequela creationis et debita naturae sanae et integrae nuncupatur. Etenim ultra gratiam creatae naturae atque debitas eidem proprietates, quae naturalis sunt ordinis, gratia insuper supernaturalis et salutaris, cum sanctificans tum etiam auxiliatrix, secundum orthodoxam fidem... in primo homine est confitenda* ».

⁶⁵) A. P., p. 478: « *Illud dicitur supernaturale, quoniam nec est naturae Principium, nec a naturae principiis promanat* ». Also p. 448; and M. R., I, p. 213: « *Ratio enimvero dictat supernaturales seu salutare actiones semper et in quocumque statu super naturae vires, esse censendas. Hoc enim ipso supernaturales dicuntur quoniam supra naturae sunt* ».

⁶⁶) BARTHOLOMAEUS MASTRIUS in his *Disput. Theol. in I lib. Sent.*, dis. 6, q. 2, a. 1, Venetiis, 1684, p. 283, tries to show from the writings of Scotus, that the supernaturality of a thing consists in the fact that it exceeds the power of

Ripalda on the notion of the supernatural, which is expressed by opposition not only to the powers of nature, but also to the demands of nature (*exigentiae naturae*)⁶⁷). It is true that the position of Ripalda was not so common then as it is now, because a number of well-known theologians like Estius, R. de Arriaga, and others preferred to define the supernatural by opposition to the powers of nature⁶⁸). Yet this is not the only reason why Bellelli has accepted this notion of the supernatural. The reason is more profound: if he had accepted Ripalda's concept of the supernatural, his theory of natural desire for the intuitive vision would be confronted with insurmountable difficulty.

Now we wish to say a few words on the relation between the two concepts: « *debitum* » and « *supernaturale* ». According to the reasoning of Bellelli, the only thing that would exclude or destroy the supernatural is that which is derived from nature, such as the properties of nature, or that which is the constitutive elements of a thing, or that which is merited by preceding acts. For him, therefore, the supernatural is not necessarily undue (*indebitum*) under all aspects; in other words, not every form of *debitum* is in opposition to the supernatural⁶⁹). So something can be due, say to the law of Providence, yet remains supernatural. In brief, « *debitum rigorosum* » alone excludes the supernatural, but « *debitum congruitatis Dei* » does not.

human nature. He says also that the Scotists explain supernaturality in the same manner.

⁶⁷) J. MARTINEZ de Ripalda, in his *De ente supernat.*, dis. 5, sect. 1, Parisiis, 1871, t. I, p. 32, argues that « *sola excellentia supra vires activas naturae non sufficit ad supernaturalitatem* ». Cf. also *ibid.*, sect. 2, n. 11, pp. 34 seq.

⁶⁸) ESTIUS, *In II Sent.*, d. 25, parag. 4, Venetiis, 1748, p. 66: « *Propriissime id dicitur naturale, quod est aut ipsa natura, aut pars naturae, aut quod a naturae principiis profluit, quodve in natura sufficientem causam habet... Hoc autem modo gratia non potest dici naturalis fuisse primo homini.* »

R. DE ARRIAGA, *Disp. Theologicae in I part. D. Th.*, disp. III, Lugduni, 1664, t. I, p. 53: « *Verissima rei supernaturalis explicatio ea est, quae ex ipso nomine desumi videtur, estque satis communis inter auctores, ut id sit supernaturale quod excedit vires tam naturae quam rei naturalis; id est quod supra omnem substantiam et supra accidentia substantiae connaturalia.* »

⁶⁹) A. P., p. 450: « *Verumtamen in hac hypothese nulla gratia desinit esse gratia, etsi debita reddatur, quoniam non est debita merito naturali ipsam praecedenti, sed debita est divinae fidelitati. Ergo non omne debitum veram gratiam excludit.* » Cf. also M. R., pp. 210, 221.

Having seen the peculiar meaning in which Bellelli uses the words « debitum » and « supernaturale » it will not be difficult to understand his mind as to why grace is due, and how it is due to rational creatures, in the wonderful providential plan.

As to the reason why grace is due to rational creatures, or why God is bound to give grace to rational creatures, Bellelli's mind may be briefly expressed as follows: In the order set up by divine providence, rational creatures were preordained to a supernatural end, on account of this they were created in the image of God, with a spiritual nature capable of their exalted destiny. Since the end to which they were preordained was supernatural and consequently exceeded their natural power to reach, they needed the help of supernatural grace to attain it. Furthermore, outside of the supernatural end they could not find happiness and rest. Therefore, God, the good and wise Creator and Provisor, is bound to give grace to His rational creatures, in order that they may attain their end and happiness. One can see immediately, from what has just been said, the repercussion of our author's doctrine of man's nature and destiny on the question of the gratuity of grace.

Bellelli is aware of the difficulty which this doctrine of his is likely to cause and he is quick to add that the manner in which grace is due is the very point which safeguards the orthodoxy of his teaching. Grace is not due as if it were part of nature, or a property of nature, or something flowing out of nature or merited by preceding good acts, in other words, grace is not due by « debitum rigorosum »; but it is due only in so far as it is considered under the right order of divine providence, that is to say, by « debitum congruitatis Dei ». Let us now listen to his own words: « God, the eternal Lord and Creator of all things is the happiness, end, and rest of His rational creatures, and if they cannot possess Him they will fall into misery and unrest. Since the grace of adoption is one of the means to possess God, consequently He is bound by His law of providence to give to His innocent rational creatures the grace of adoption and other gifts necessary to them. And one of these necessary gifts is actual grace » ⁷⁰). And in his last work

⁷⁰) A. P., p. 471: « At vero Aeternus Dominus, & rerum omnium Factor, Creaturae rationalis servae suae felicitas est, finis, & requies, ut sine ipsius pos-

we find the following passage: « Since, according to divine providence, our exalted end consists in the beatific possession of God and the eternal communion with the Saints in the Heavenly Jerusalem which cannot be reached without the help of grace, it follows that the just God is bound by His own providence to give grace to His rational creatures in order that they may reach their sublime destiny. God is so bound that He may not deny His rational creatures this help of grace without previous fault of their own, or exile them, His own innocent images from the heavenly kingdom and their celestial patrimony for all eternity ». Further on, he continues, « If someone objects: ' If God could not create rational creatures without grace, it implies that grace is due to nature '. My answer will be: ' The word *due* (*debet*) should be distinguished. Grace is not due to nature in the same sense as properties of nature are due, or preceding merit is due. Grace is due to nature only in so far as it is constituted under the law of divine providence ' »⁷¹). The word « due » in all

sessione nonnisi queat misera semper, & irrequieta manere. Et aliunde adoptio est medium necessarium omnino ad hanc adipiscendam felicitatem, quo nimirum amoto, in omnem rationalis creatura rueret miseriam,... Ne ergo tantum malum supremo, & rectissimo Conditori, & Provisori imputari possit, dicendum est, teneri eum lege Providentiae suae, ut creaturae rationali innocenti, quantumvis servae, gratiam adoptionis, aliaque dona necessaria, impertiatur. ... gratiam adoptionis, etsi necessariam, non tamen solam sufficere pro aeterni Regni adeptione. Necessaria est insuper perseverantia finalis, quae... in statu vero innocentiae cum versatili adiutorio a libero descendebat arbitrio ».

⁷¹) M. R., I, pp. 220 seq.: « Hac autem posita Divinae Providentiae dispositione, cum supernus finis noster, beataque Dei possessio, Sanctorumque Civium perpetua societas, sine vera gratia nequeat comparari, consequens, est, Deum justum debuisse Providentiae suae, quod media necessaria creaturae Rationali Innocenti, gratiam videlicet pro finis tam sublimis adeptione concesserit: et ita debuisse, ut illa sine culpa denegare non posset, ne imaginem suam Innocentem a Patria, Regno, Caelesti Patrimonio, per totam aeternitatem exulem faceret... ».

« Quod si dicas: Nequit Deus creaturam condere Rationalem sine gratia. Igitur naturae gratiam debet. Respondeo aequivocum verbum debet esse distinctione exponendum. Naturae enim gratiam Deus non debet tamquam proprietatem ex ipsa nascentem, vel ejusdem praecedenti merito tribuendam: debet vero gratiam naturae quatenus constitutae sub gratuita Providentiae legibus ».

In our translation of the texts we aim at giving the essential thought contained therein and not at rendering slavishly sentence by sentence or word for word.

these texts should be understood according to Bellelli's own explanation of « debitum » which we have exposed above, for there is no reason to interpret the word otherwise.

One question yet remains: How does the gratuity or supernatural character of grace fare under the so-called « debitum congruitatis Dei » ? In Bellelli's mind there does not appear the slightest sign of doubt that the gratuity of grace is kept perfectly inviolate under the « debitum congruitatis Dei ». The reason is because the supernatural character of grace does not suffer any injury as a result of this debitum ⁷²). Then he points out a parallel case in the writings of other theologians of his time. These theologians hold that sufficient grace is given to fallen man that he may keep the commandments, for without this grace his transgression would not be imputable to him. This grace they agree can be due to the law of divine providence, yet it remains true grace. On account of this, Bellelli fails to see why the other theologians are so disturbed when he says that the supernatural help of grace which is necessary to the innocent rational creature to attain that sublime end to which God had freely ordained him, is due to him according to the law of providence ; whilst at the same time they teach that by virtue of man's gratuitous elevation to the supernatural end, grace necessary for man to keep the commandments is due to him, yet grace does not cease to be true grace. We shall now let Bellelli speak for himself: « We justly defend », he says, « that the word ' grace ' can be applied not only to the grace of the Redeemer which is given to sinners, but also can truly be applied to the grace given to innocent man, though the latter was given him by some title of due (ex aliquo debito). The ' gratia adjuvans ' which is necessary for rational creatures to keep the commandments can be due to the law of divine providence, yet remains at the same time true grace in name and in kind. This same doctrine is defended by some recent authors when they treat of the subject of sufficient grace (adjutoria sufficientia Redemptoris). They admit that this grace is given to fallen man in order that he may keep

⁷²) It is worth noting that our author applies here his peculiar concept of the relation between « debitum » and « supernaturale » which we explained above. It is that the supernatural character of a thing is kept inviolate by the use of « debitum congruitatis Dei » ; because to him the only thing that would destroy the supernaturality of a thing is « debitum rigorosum ».

the commandments, and without this grace his failings would not be imputable to him. How unreasonable are these authors in calling us Baianists when we, with much more reason, say the same thing of the grace given to innocent man » ⁷³).

On the subject of the gratuity of grace Bellelli is sincerely convinced that there is a difference between his doctrine and that of Baius. He vehemently avows the difference, and he thinks that his distinction of « debitum » has sufficiently demonstrated the essential difference between his position and that of Baius. The latter, according to Bellelli, reduced the gift of grace, which was bestowed on rational creatures in the state of innocence, to something of the purely natural order and owed to nature by the

⁷³) A. P., p. 458: « Quod autem gratia adjuvantis possit esse debita ex lege Providentiae, ne scilicet reddantur rationali creaturae impossibilia divina mandata, nec tamen ullum sui nominis, aut generis patiatur dispendium, nihil, est quod certius, et vehementius etiam Recentiores, quibuscum disputamus, inculcant. Etenim ipsi contentiosissime docent, Deum teneri ex lege Providentiae, et justitiae dare unicuique sufficientia adjutoria etiam Redemptoris, quibus possunt proxime, et expedite mandata servare; quae nihilominus quantumvis debita, ad veram gratiam pertinere defendunt, ut deficientibus ipsis creatura rationalis non nisi peccatura sit, peccato tamen non ipsi imputabili ad culpam, sed Provisori, qui in necessariis defecit. Quid ergo conqueruntur, nosque tanquam Baianos invidiosissime criminantur, cum nonnisi eadem ipsorum doctrina, sed potiori jure, de gratia Conditoris, non Redemptoris disserentes, utamur ». Bellelli repeats the same argument in his later writings. And these we simply quote without translating them.

In his E. A., parag. 6 he says: « Nimirum si Deus gratiam sufficientiam singulis hominibus dandam debet gratuitae elevationi, suisque justissimis legibus, ne reddentur impossibilia divina mandata, nec tamen ob tale debitum desinit esse gratia; cur veram gratiam debere non poterat gratuitae suae Providentiae, quod antecedenti sua voluntati voluit suam imaginem beatificare, et salvam facere, absque eo quod gratia desinat esse gratia, et ex tali debito usque ad naturam ipsam deprimatur ? ».

In his last work M. R., I, pp. 221 seq., he asserts: « Nimirum si aequo jure Catholici Doctores sustinent, Deum gratiam sufficientem singulis dandam hominibus per merita Salvatoris, gratuitae Elevationi, suisque justissimis Providentiae debere legibus, ne reddantur impossibilia mandata; nec tamen ob tale debitum illam desinere esse gratiam ajunt: Cur veram, supernamque conditoris gratiam gratuitae Providentiae debere Deus non poterit, qua antecedenti sua voluntate imaginem suam Beatificare, ad supernamque Civitatem proficisci voluerit, absque eo quod gratia desinat esse gratia, aut quod ex tali debito usque ad naturae ordinem deprimatur ? Debetur illa, debetur ista; illa debetur, et revera debetur, et innegabiliter, ut ajunt, debetur, et gratia est; ista debetur, et gratia non est ? Qualiter id dici possit, sane non assequor ».

« debitum rigorosum », i. e., as flowing out of nature or like the properties of nature ⁷⁴); whilst he, on the contrary, teaches that grace is not owed to nature in the manner indicated above but only owed to God's law of providence, i. e., owed by the « debitum congruitatis » ⁷⁵).

The notion of « debitum congruitatis » as explained by Bellelli is, we think, the decisive point in our present attempt to find out what is the difference between Bellelli's doctrine and that of Baius. When Baius said that the supernatural endowment was due to rational creatures in the state of innocence, he meant that this endowment was strictly necessary to innocent creatures, because it was an integral part of their nature, and that the opposite, that is, to deny it to them, is absolutely impossible. On the other hand when Bellelli says that the supernatural endowment or grace is *due*, he means that there is a spontaneous necessity on the part of God to give grace to innocent creatures in view of His own providence which has preordained them to a supernatural end and created them to His image. This spontaneous necessity is like the necessity resulting from a divine promise. And to Bellelli also, the opposite is impossible.

Unfortunately, both the explanation of spontaneous necessity and the analogy of divine promise show us only that there is a difference between the *due* which our author uses and that which was used by Baius, but they do not help us to determine what exactly is the difference between the two; because the expression « *spontaneous necessity* » is not self-explanatory, and Bellelli prefers to leave it without further determination. Consequently, there is no way of determining what is the exact implication of that expression, and of arriving at an accurate idea of the binding force resulting from Bellelli's « debitum congruitatis Dei ». Besides, it is difficult not to notice that in the illustration furnished by our author, there is a difficulty which he must have overlooked. It is the fact that in view of God's attributes and perfections, it is just as difficult for God to break His promise as for Him to be unjust.

⁷⁴) L. RENWART, *l. c.*, p. 120 and p. 193 thinks that Bellelli, like the other Augustinians, has misunderstood Baius' doctrine, because de facto Baius has not expressed himself thus.

⁷⁵) Cf. A. P., p. 455 and p. 457.

Nevertheless, it is not correct to affirm that there is no real difference between the doctrine of Bellelli and that of Baius on this point, or that the difference between the two is purely verbal. Such an affirmation would be true only if Bellelli had spoken with a precise and determined terminology and had considered the word « due » (debitum) under the same aspect as Baius considered it. Since both conditions are not verified, there is no reason to accuse our author's doctrine of Baianism. We can only regret the fact that his terminology is imperfect on account of its indeterminateness.

It is not surprising to the modern reader to learn that the doctrine of Bellelli has aroused so much bitter opposition. For our present purpose we judge that it is not necessary to include here a study of the attacks made on our author, or the defence written on his behalf by Berti. The reason is that this work can well constitute a separate and interesting study of its own, but above all because we, having gone through the writings of his opponents, do not think that it would give our reader a clearer idea of Bellelli's doctrine if we were to include them here.

Before we conclude, we wish to summarize the main ideas of Bellelli concerning the doctrine of man's nature and destiny and of the gratuity of grace, and to say a few words on its relation with other connected subjects.

It is impossible for anyone who has been following closely our exposition of Bellelli's doctrine not to notice that the different points of doctrine are closely linked to one other. Starting from a determined historical notion of man as « image of God », our author asserts that man can have no other connatural beatitude than the intuitive vision of God. He says further that a natural beatitude as the true end of man, attained through conceptual knowledge of God, is unthinkable. Then he affirms that man has an innate desire for the intuitive vision, though not having the power to attain it. From this optimistic view of man's nature our author concludes that God, the wise Creator and Provisor, must have first the intention of ordaining man to a supernatural destiny before He intended to create him ; otherwise He would not have created him with such a nature, but rather like a stone, a plant, or a brute. He never presupposes the fact of man's supernatural elevation. He always regards it as the real state of man.

But for him the positive elevation of man to the supernatural order consists not in the acquiring of a *new end*, but rather in the conferring of grace by which man can attain to the intuitive vision which is natural to him.

Bellelli bases his doctrine of the gratuity of grace on his peculiar concept of « *debitum congruitatis Dei* ». He teaches that this « *debitum* » is between « *ratio convenientiae* » and « *debitum rigorosum* ». Then he maintains that « *debitum congruitatis Dei* » and the supernatural do not exclude each other. Applying his notion of « *debitum congruitatis Dei* » to the doctrine of the gratuity of grace he says that God is bound by this « *debitum* » to give to His rational creatures the supernatural help of grace, the necessary means to attain their final end. The reason is because he considers that he has sufficiently established that rational creatures have their final end in the intuitive vision of God, which is something supernatural, that is, beyond the powers of nature. In other words, Bellelli asserts that grace is due to rational creatures. Yet grace remains truly supernatural if we interpret the word « *due* » in the sense of « *debitum congruitatis Dei* ».

The other preternatural gifts bestowed on rational creatures in the state of innocence are also due to them in the sense of « *debitum congruitatis* »; because from the historical aspect, in the light of which our author sees the problem, death is a punishment, concupiscence is something positively evil, and rational creatures would not have suffered these and the other miseries of life if they had not sinned. Since God is good and just, He would not have inflicted punishment and miseries on them if they had remained innocent. Therefore our author concludes that in the state of innocence God is bound by His laws of providence, i. e., by « *debitum congruitatis* », to give them those gifts which remove these miseries that we suffer today on account of sin.

The doctrine of the gratuity of grace and the other gifts, as explained above, is defended very strongly by Bellelli. It is intimately connected with the whole structure of his doctrine of man's primitive state, and from it the theory of the impossibility of pure nature follows as a logical sequence. For if it is true, as our author repeatedly asserts, that the vision of God is the sole end of rational creatures, and that God is bound by His goodness and providence to give all necessary means to them in order that they may attain their end, it is only logical to conclude that grace and the other

gifts are due to rational creatures in view of God's law of providence. Consequently the state of pure nature, which by its definition excludes grace and the other preternatural gifts, is impossible ⁷⁶).

* * *

We are going to conclude this study of ours with a remark on the position of Bellelli in the Augustinian school, especially in respect to his peculiar manner of expounding and defending the gratuity of grace. Has it been rejected by the Augustinians as a whole, or has it been endorsed enthusiastically? We think neither is entirely true.

It is true that it has been privately attacked within the School itself, namely by N. Girken, his own confrere who belonged to the German province of the same Order, and whose attack occasioned the writing of his Autograph Letter of 1717, to which we have referred several times in the course of our study ⁷⁷). Yet this disagreement between Girken and Bellelli cannot be considered as a breach of a serious character; it should be regarded rather as a family quarrel not meant to be divulged.

On the other hand Berti devoted two of his works to answer publicly point by point the attacks made on the teaching of Bellelli covering both the primitive and fallen states of man. In these two works he explicitly defended Bellelli's doctrine of God's antecedent will and gratuity of grace ⁷⁸). More important still is the harmony we notice between Bellelli's doctrine and that of the official declaration of the Augustinian position in regard to the

⁷⁶) Since we are not treating the question of pure nature here ex professo, it is not necessary to develop the different arguments Bellelli uses to defend the theory of the impossibility of pure nature. The whole third book of A. P., his first work, also part of E. A., his autograph letter, and of M. R., his last work are devoted to this purpose.

⁷⁷) We have not been able to trace the letter which N. Girken is said to have addressed to the General of the Order and in which he expresses his disagreement with Bellelli's doctrine.

⁷⁸) Cf. *Augustinianum systema de gratia*, l. c. (cf. note 14), parag. 6, nn. 6 & 8. Also cf. *In opusculum inscriptum RR. I. Languet Archiep. Sen. Judicium de Operibus Theologicis FF. Bellelli et Berti, aequissima hujus expostulatio*, cap. VIII, pp. 42 b, 45 a. The last work can be found in Berti's *De disciplinis theologicis*, Bassano, 1776, volume VII.

question of the gratuity of the supernatural endowments given to man in the state of innocence. This declaration was sent to Pope Clement XIII by A. Vasquez, the Superior General of the Augustinian Hermits⁷⁹). It comprises twenty three theses which sum up the basic doctrines of the Augustinian School. The third thesis touches our subject and reads as follows: « Deus gratiam, immortalitatem, et pacem non debuit homini, attento jure naturae ipsius ; debuit tamen sibi, ut nemo sub Deo justo, bono ac provido miser esset, nisi mereretur »⁸⁰). Also significant is the following remark made by Father A. Trapè on this very point of doctrine in Bellelli's writing: « Fulgentius Bellelli frequentius loquitur de gratia debita primo homini titulo justissimae providentiae: qui loquendi modus, plus minus, ad superiores redit locutiones (' superiores locutiones ' refers to the concepts of ' decentia Dei ' and ' potentia Dei absoluta et ordinata '). Notandum est autem circa nostram quaestionem Bellelli singularem protulisse sententiam ; autumavit enim non elevationem ad ordinem supernaturalem impossibilem esse consequenter ad voluntatem Dei constituendi caelestem civitatem. Hinc est quod securius ipse loquatur et dicta ejus duriora nobis videantur et sint. Haec autem sententia proculdubio extra rem esset et vix non verbis luderet, nisi auctor protinus adderet Deum hominem ad sui imaginem creare antecedenti voluntate seipsum ei communicandi, aut nullo modo creare »⁸¹).

From what we have seen we may conclude that Bellelli has been faithful to the fundamental points of doctrine upheld in the Augustinian school. He defends the opinion that grace is due to rational creatures as the Augustinians in general try to do ; though the device he uses is different⁸²), and the manner in which he expresses himself is more straightforward and the way he argues more violent. Like the other Augustinians he appeals to the divine attributes and has recourse to the same order or disposition established by God's providence, in order to defend the common

⁷⁹) Cf. E. DAMMIG, *Il Movimento giansenista a Roma nella second metà del Sec. XVIII, Studi et Testi*, 1945, n. 119, pp. 343 seq.

⁸⁰) *Ibidem*, p. 344.

⁸¹) Cf. A. TRAPÈ, *l. c.*, p. 229.

⁸²) Instead of using the device commonly employed in the Augustinian school: the distinction of « Potentia Dei absoluta et ordinata », Bellelli prefers his own distinction of « Debitum rigorosum et congruitatis Dei ».

theory of the impossibility of pure nature. He is indeed a true Augustinian at heart, but represents one of the extreme tendencies of the School. He is more original in his views and more independent in his thinking, consequently more interesting.

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SUMMARIUM

Homo, creatura rationalis, secundum Dei imaginem et similitudinem creatus est, simul ac propter pacem et felicitatem. Ipse ad unionem et conformitatem cum Deo, suo Exemplari, semper tendit; et aliam perfectionem, beatitudinem, requiemque non habet nisi Deum ipsum. Deus, in quantum est vera beatitudo et requies hominis, non est Deus uti abstractivè cognitus, sed uti intuitive visus. Homo ad hanc beatitudinem et requiem naturaliter tendit appetitu non libero vel elicitò sed innato, quamvis potentiam objectum consequendi non habeat sine externi adjutorii fulcimento.

Deus, antequam creationem rationalis creaturae decerneret, jam habuit intentionem se huic creaturae communicandi atque ad finem supernaturalem hanc evehendi. Nam nisi intentio sese communicandi et hominem elevandi praecessisset, Deus minime creaturam juxta imaginem sui spiritualem, immortalem atque sui capacem finxisset.

Cum finis hominis supernaturalis sit, proinde vires naturales excedens, et cum extra hunc finem homo neque beatitudinem neque quietem invenire possit, Deus, bonus sapiensque Conditor, gratia, quae, medium necessarium est, illum ornare debet. Attamen, vox « debet » non stricte intelligitur uti in sensu debiti rigorosi; ita ut gratia sit pars naturae, vel a naturae principiis scaturiens, vel ut merito praecedenti tribuatur, sicut Baius et Pelagius docent; sed tantummodo in sensu « debiti congruitatis Dei », scilicet prout stat « sub recto ordine providentiae divinae ». Nam ratio gratiae tali debito non tollitur. Gratia enim potest esse debita ex congruitate Dei seu legibus providentiae et simul remanere vera gratia; et hoc modo, nullum « nec nominis nec generis » detrimentum patitur.
