

The secular war on the supernatural

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By Dr. Alice Von Hildebrand

In 1965 my husband, Dietrich von Hildebrand and I had a private audience with Pope Paul VI, in which my husband "shot from the hip" as usual, saying "Your Holiness, you realise that the Church is going through the worst crisis in history, worse than the Protestant Reformation" (which I usually refer to as the Protestant Deformation). The Pope seemed to be surprised and my husband continued: "What has taken place is that people have lost sight of the supernatural."

Partaking in God's life

The supernatural is the greatest gift that God has given us. We are humble, modest creatures. The human male was made from the dust of the earth, a very un-aristocratic origin; the human female did a little bit better and was taken from the body of a human person. (This is one of the big triumphs that women have, one of the advantages that they have over men!) The supernatural is a partaking in God's very life. There is not one single religion that can compete with Christianity, a religion allowing us to become God-like by participation in His life.

The supernatural is something that could never have been invented by the most inventive human person. The supernatural is a new song, a new music coming from above that never entered man's head. In some way you can prove the Divinity of Christ by saying no human being would ever have invented a God who chose to take the form of a slave, to suffer and to die, to re-open for us the gates of Heaven, Humanly speaking, it is sheer madness.

It was the supernatural which converted Edith Stein, who studied under Husserl with my husband. She was an atheist who one very fine day read the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila. She started at seven in the evening and the next morning at seven o'clock she said "I'm going to become a Roman Catholic" and she became a Roman Catholic saint (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross).

Co-operating with Christ

It was his discovery of the supernatural which drew my husband into the Church; a new reality, something infinitely more beautiful, the supernatural was infinitely above what he had experienced before. Following his conversion from atheism to Catholicism, until his death, it was his very particular mission to fight for the reality of the supernatural, which he saw as being eroded more and more. An erosion so systematic that it has led today to

an absolute rebellion, when modern men say to God "We do not want it, we can do without it; human nature can perfect itself by itself, we do not need any help."

The supernatural life was lost by sin and this loss was so irreparable that God alone could give it back to us, it was impossible, by human effort, to re-conquer this Divine life that had been given to us. And this is, of course, once again, the amazing message of Christianity, that God became man, to be humiliated, to be rejected and ridiculed and to die the most agonising death to re-open for us the gates of Heaven.

We have the possibility of re-living, re-conquering the supernatural life through the message of Christ, through the Church and the sacraments, but God asks for our co-operation. St. Augustine said *"He Who made you without you, will not sanctify you or save you without your help"*. And Christ tells us very explicitly *"If you want to become my disciples, carry your cross and follow me."*

Fear of humiliation

To have supernatural life might be very appealing; to carry one's cross