

## CURRENT THEOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

### APOLOGETICS

**THE RESURRECTION.** A prominent argument of the adverse critics against the credibility of the Gospel narratives of the resurrection of Christ is the alleged inconsistency and contradiction of the stories. In the article, "Apparitions of Christ Risen," [*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 2 (July, 1940) 3, 195-214] Cuthbert Lattey, S.J., has a brief and excellent refutation of the objections. Through the use of the 'Principle of Compenetration' the author is able to dispose of the alleged discrepancies. The principle is deduced from the usage of historians; compenetration is a procedure in historical reporting whereby a writer, deliberately summarizing and compressing his narrative, reports the substantials of two or more events as if they belonged to one occasion. Thus, according to Father Lattey, Saint Matthew 'compenetrated' the visits of the Holy Women before and after the arrival of Peter and John at the tomb into one visit.

The writer further emphasizes the principle that as far as history and apologetics are concerned it is not necessary that all discrepancies be cleared from a narrative, that very often such minor inconsistencies in several writers are a proof of independent, and therefore, of more reliable testimony. However, while this position may be taken for the proposing of an *argumentum ad hominem* against the adverse critics, the Catholic exegete is aware that no real inconsistencies are to be found in the inspired narrative; we must—and we can—answer the alleged objections.

Incidentally the author manifests his opinion on several disputed points concerning the endings of the Gospels. The Gospel of Saint Mark originally ended with 16, 8; the writer is not concerned in the article to prove or disprove the Marcan authorship of verses 9-20, which are the genuine conclusion rather than the shorter conclusion of the mss. Bobbio. Again, the Gospel of Saint John originally ended with chapter 20; it was at a later time that the same Apostle added the final chapter. Lastly, it is important to observe how Saint Luke has emphasized the Ascension, both in his Gospel and in the beginning of *Acts*.

**THE MESSIAH.** For a recent expression of the modern Jewish concept of the Messiah one may consult the fourth pamphlet of the series, *Post-Biblical Judaism*, written by Israel Betten, D.D., under the sub-title, "Its Conception of Israel's Place in the World." The author states that the vitalizing ideals of the Rabbinic tradition have been and are the majesty of God, the grandeur of the Torah of Moses, and the destiny of the soul of Israel. Further,

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<sup>1</sup>In *Current Theology* (September issue) page 303, line 20, for *deny* read *assert*.

he finds a peculiar competency in the soul of his people to carry out a program of forwarding these ideals; hence, Israel is to strive to bear to others the message of God and to bring about the ideal fulfilment of the Messianic Kingdom. In this Kingdom the ceremonial law will not prevail; there will be no external religious institute; rather, there will be an internal guidance of men on their road to the holy mount of God.

LOURDES. In his book *Faiths That Healed*, (D. Appleton, 1940) Doctor Ralph H. Major has indicated in his title the view of Lourdes which he puts forth in one of his chapters. For, even though physicians have found some of the miracles inexplicable, the writer seeks for a subjective cause in preference to an admission of the miracle in the objective order. However, the Doctor has not handled Lourdes with even the shadow of unfairness with which it is treated in *Lourdes* (Oxford Univ. Press) by Edith Saunders, to whom Lourdes is a "pious fair, where superstition, fetishism and a hypocritical commerce flourish side by side;" its history is "a tale of chicane and hypocrisy." Neither of these authors seems to have read or studied the three-volume *opus magnum* of L. J. M. Cros, S.J., "*L'histoire de Notre-Dame de Lourdes d'après les documents et les témoins*," published as recently as 1925.

But if Catholic apologists despair of the cavalier way in which others fail to consult our source books, there are numerous books more easily available on the shrine and on Saint Bernadette which would enlighten outsiders. During this summer Dom Francis Izard, O.S.B., has published his *The Meaning of Lourdes* (Sands, London, 174 pp). The author, a Benedictine monk, was formerly a physician; he visited Lourdes during every year from 1920 to 1930, and was personally concerned in dealing with six of the eleven cases which are treated in his book. The text contains a description of the spring at the shrine and a history of the origin and procedure of the Medical Bureau. Eleven cures which have been wrought at Lourdes are retailed with all the medical documentation and discussion, and this is the most interesting and valuable part of the work. The author also notes the gradual change which has come over the skeptical medical world—from contempt to an attitude of interest, with the result that some hard-headed doctors have been convinced of the supernatural effects, while others have at least reluctantly admitted that certain of the cases at Lourdes are scientifically inexplicable. The author does not develop, though he touches upon what might be the subject of another book—the tremendous miracle of Lourdes to be found in the resignation to the Divine will which a visit to the shrine leaves in the souls of the thousands of the uncured pilgrims of Our Lady.

## THE CHURCH

APOSTOLICITY OF DOCTRINE. A valuable essay on this topic is to be found in the article of A. D. Doyle, S.J., "Saint Irenaeus on the Popes and Early Heretics," [*Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 54 (Sept. 1939) 3, 298-307]. It concerns the interpretation of the *potentior principalitas* which is found in the Third Book of the *Adversus Haereses: Ad hanc enim ecclesiam propter potentiores principalitatem necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam, hoc est, eos qui sunt undequaque fideles, in qua semper ab his qui sunt undequaque conservata est ea quae est ab apostolis traditio*. Upon this follows the catalog of the Roman Bishops. Minor problems of interpretation occur in deciding whether *convenire ad* means *resort to* or *agree with*; whether *necesse est* is to be understood morally or logically; whether *omnem* means *all* or *whole*; whether *qui sunt undequaque* is meant twice or is a copyist's ditto-graphy; and whether one may emend the ending through a conjecture of the original Greek which has been lost. The main problem of interpretation is the meaning and implications of the *potentior principalitas*.

The writer invokes history and etymology to combat a popular Anglican interpretation, which runs as follows: "To this church all ought to resort for its more influential pre-eminence; in this church the tradition from the Apostles has been preserved by those who are from all quarters." The meaning which emerges from this is that Rome was a clearing-house for all doctrines; views were contributed by the provincials to the capital, and in Rome through compromise, agreement, trimming, etc., an amalgam was the doctrinal result, and the residuum after the melting process was declared to be apostolic doctrine. This view of the passage is found in Puller's *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, and less emphatically in Symond's appendix to the book, "Church Universal and the See of Rome."

Father Doyle finds this interpretation of the text quite wrong. It omits to take into account the history and context. History makes very clear that heretics flocked to Rome in the second century—and many of them were condemned and excommunicated there; that far from being a clearing-house for their wares, the Roman See was an authoritative tribunal which was judging and denouncing them; that, finally, Rome was not awaiting contributions from the rest of the world, but was even watching over the world and condemning some heresies at a distance as well as those, either of provincials or of Roman priests, at home.

Again, the interpretation of Puller and others takes too little account of the context of Saint Irenaeus' passage. He is refuting the claim of certain heretics that they have apostolic doctrine; to Irenaeus the safeguard of doctrine is the preaching of the bishops who have succeeded the Apostles; but it would be too long to name the successors of the several Apostles;

hence, he confines himself to naming the succession of the "greatest, most ancient and most universally known See, that of Saints Peter and Paul; *ad hanc enim ecclesiam* etc.

For the meaning of *principalitas* Father Doyle goes back to the *Les normes de l'enseignement chrétien dans la littérature patristique* of Father Van den Eynde (1933), where arguments are put forth that the word means *primitiveness*; it refers to something which goes back to the beginning, which is linked directly with origins, which derives its traditions from an original source. Taken together with *potentior* the word *principalitas* shows that Rome is superior, stronger, more reliable, more outstanding in preserving apostolic doctrine. Hence, there can be no question of the preservation of apostolic doctrine through the agency of those who come to Rome; they do not bring doctrine to Rome. They find it there.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH. PHOTIUS. Irenic investigation on the part of Catholic scholars of the origins and history of the Oriental Churches continues. A particular historical problem is treated in the article of M. Gordillo, S.J., "Photius et Primatus Romanus," [*Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 6 (1940) 1-2, 6-39]. One of the most anti-Roman documents emanating from Constantinople was a piece of writing, attributed to Photius, which was found in the Bodleian Library and was published in 1672 by the Anglican minister, Beveridge. Its Greek title indicated it was written "against those who claimed that Rome was the primatial See." The oldest of the five manuscripts of this work dates from the thirteenth century; most Catholic critics agreed with the assertion that Photius was the author. In the first part the primacy of Peter is denied; in the second, it is argued on historical and canonical grounds that the jurisdiction of the Roman See is territorial, not universal; in the third, further events and facts are gathered which favor the general thesis.

Father Gordillo denies that this *opusculum* is the work of Photius. He shows that the first part is identical in substantial with the disputation which Nicolaus Mesarites delivered on August 30, 1206 before the Latin Patriarch of Constantinople, and there are indications that the disputant did not borrow from older sources but composed anew. For the ideas are those of the thirteenth century schismatics, such as the denial that Peter was Bishop of Rome, that the Petrine confession of *Matthew* 16, 18 referred to Peter in person (it was alleged to refer to Peter's faith). These were not the thoughts of Photius' day, when it was claimed that Rome's universal jurisdiction grew out of the translation of his See to Rome; Photius held to Peter's primacy, but not to the primacy of the Roman See. There are also minor historical indications that the document belongs to the first quarter of the thirteenth century, and not to the time of Photius.

THE ORIENTAL CHURCHES. REUNION. Those interested in the reunion of the Oriental Churches with the See of Rome might easily fail to consult the files of the canonical commentary, *Periodica*. In its pages [28 (June 1939) 3, 203-209] is contained a complete reference-list of a century of documents emanating from the Holy See, of the answers of the Orientals, and of other pertinent sources, in the article "De unitate ecclesiae orientalis et occidentalis restituenda, documentis S. Sedis ultimi saeculi (1848-1938) illustrata," by Joseph Schweigl, S.J. The principal historical events to which the article refers are, first, the repudiation on the part of four patriarchs and twenty-nine bishops of the exhortation of Pius IX, *In suprema Petri Apostoli sede* in May 1848; again, the refusal of the Eastern Bishops to attend the Vatican Council through reunion. In 1862 Pius IX set up a section of Propaganda which dealt with Oriental questions; this became the *Congregatio pro Ecclesia Orientali* in 1917. Finally, under Pius IX occurred the canonization of Saint Josaphat.

The principal events under Leo XIII were the extension of the feast of Saints Cyrillus and Methodius to the universal Church, and the numerous instructions and letters dealing with the training of priests, the attitude to be taken with respect to the Eastern Churches and towards their liturgies, and with the conduct and policy of delegates in Eastern territories. Under Pius X the Roman See continued its numerous instructions on policies and there was an attempt to spread the cult of the Blessed Eucharist and frequent communion. Under Benedict XV the Oriental Institute was established in Rome, and Saint Ephrem was declared a Doctor of the Universal Church. During the Pontificate of Pius XI sixty documents were concerned with topics related to the Oriental Churches, treating of doctrine, studies, devotions, training of priests, relations to the Roman See, canonical procedure, discipline and liturgy.

In a general survey the writer points out that the endeavors of the Holy See to reunite to herself the Oriental Churches never ceases, that the constant policy of Rome has been to preserve the rites and discipline of the East except where dogmatic error may have crept in. Finally, a greater sympathy and knowledge on the part of the Latin Church have been noticeably the result of the policy of the Roman Pontiffs.

THE ORIENTAL CHURCHES. DEVOTION. Father Schweigl also mentions the matter of interchanging devotions, but a more lengthy discussion of a particular devotion is to be found, again in *Periodica* [28 (Febr. 1939) 1,72-85], in his article, "Num in ritu byzantino officium dulcissimi Jesu aequiparetur pietati SS. Cordis Jesu?" The author expounds the liturgical principles which govern the insertion of an office or a devotion into another

rite. First, it must be established that the office or devotion in question is not already found in the other rite; thus, the Greeks have equivalently the Latin Litany of Loretto, and, hence, this devotional form is not transferred to the Greek rite. Secondly, if an analogy of the office or devotion is lacking, and there is a desire to transfer either, the office or devotion is given a form out of the elements of the other rite and in correspondence with its tenor and spirit; thus, the concession of Jubilee Indulgences in 1934 was conceived in a way which corresponded with Oriental practice and devotion. Finally, there is, occasionally, a total transfer of a devotion, when its form in one rite is basically of the temper and spirit of another; thus, the Latin Ambrosian Hymn has been transferred to the Greek liturgy.

In treating the particular devotion of the Sacred Heart in the light of these principles Father Schweigl finds that the Greeks have had an office *Dulcissimi Jesu* since the twelfth century, attributed to Saint Theoktistos who lived about 880, and also an office *Supplicationis Dulcissimi Jesu*. These offices have similarities to our office of the Sacred Heart, but they are not fully equivalent. They have the fundamental idea of the love of Christ which is to be requited by man's love of Our Lord, but they lack emphasis on reparative love and they have no explicit reference to the Heart of Christ as the organ and symbol of love. The author adds that the expiatory *Officium Supplicationis Dulcissimi Jesu*, which was prescribed by Pius XI for the Byzantine Church of Saint Anthony the Abbot on the Esquiline has more of the reparative elements which are found in the Latin office; here, there would be need only to modify certain of the final prayers (and in the prayers, under Church control, there is greater liberty in modifying) in order to make the Eastern office fully equivalent in spirit and important elements to the solemn office of the Sacred Heart.

**THE SANCTITY OF THE CHURCH IN HER MEMBERS.** Catholic theologians will quarrel with the methods whereby Burton Scott Easton has formulated his conclusions in the article, "The Church in the New Testament," [*Anglican Theological Review*, 22 (July 1940) 3, 157-168]. The author will be found to have over-emphasized certain scriptural passages and excized some which do not agree with his hypothesis, which is developed as follows. In the Old Testament congregation of Israel (the *kahal*) the members enjoyed privileges through the fact of membership; thus, they were *saints* because they belonged to the holy congregation, and not because of personal moral merits. Now, primitive Christians were the Israel of God; Christ's mission was to the Jews, and His mission-charge to His followers was to work through the Jews. He laid little emphasis on the Church in our understanding of it, though His preaching of the Kingdom had great *indirect*

influence on the views of the early Christians concerning the nature of the Church. After the "shattering" experience of Pentecost the disciples made much of the alternative of accepting or denying Jesus; this led to a new concept of the true Israel, now no longer in continuity with that of the Old Testament, and it led to an insistence on the moral doctrine of the Way. Later, when the influx of Gentile converts shows that they will outnumber the Jews, there is a further shift from the older emphasis on the fact of membership to the later insistence on the following of the Way of Christ. The true Israel is now conceived to include those who belong and who follow loyally.

But what, then, must be said of Christ's doctrine in the parables which speak of evil members within the Church up to the time of Judgment. Doctor Easton solves this difficulty by saying that the parable of the Tares is of a secondary and artificial character; it is "notorious" for this, and the parable of the Marriage Feast is "equally notorious." These passages contain the views of the more tolerant during the Gnostic crisis; these views are likewise found in 2 Tim. 2, 17-21, and later, in *Pastor*. But the tolerance was shortlived; there was a return to the older view of the Church, holy and without blemish.

Merely passing attention may be called to two books written by various Catholic authors and edited by a Protestant clergyman, Hermann Mulert. In 1937 there appeared *Der Katholizismus, Sein Storb und Werde*; this work was competently answered in the German Catholic press. A second book pretends to rebut the refutations and reiterates the charges of the first volume; it is entitled *Der Katholizismus der Zukunft. Aufbau und kritische Abwehr*, (Klotz, 1940, 152 pp.). In this *Catholicism of the Future* it is claimed that three factors have separated the Church and the Gospel: an excessive preponderance of intellectualism in dogma, an excessive legalism in practice, and an unbalanced sacramentalism in devotion. Among the concrete reforms proposed by this group the note of a strong anti-clericalism is sounded; they wish spiritual men (and not only morally respectable men) in positions of Church authority; there is to be an age-limit for bishops and priests, a relaxation of clerical celibacy, a greater emphasis on the Bible in clerical education, a greater freedom for scholarship (with a reform of the Index), and a greater regard for the mind of the laity. All this will aid the greater cultivation of the prophetic and ministerial element in Christianity and bring the Church of today nearer the Church of the Gospel. The first of the two books is already on the Index; the second is of a similar nature.

If we turn to another book of this year we will find a plea for the sanctity of men without any membership in any Church. Conrad Henry Moehl-

man has published his *Protestantism's Challenge: An Historical Study of the Survival Value of Protestantism*, (Harper, 1940, 286 pp.). The author accepts too cavalierly and uncritically that the attack of rationalists on the Bible has shattered the fundamental tenets of Protestantism; doctrine after doctrine has been seen to be untenable as Biblical science *advances!* But the permanent value of the so-called ethical quadrilateral of Jesus (purity, love, heroism, humility) cannot be denied. The author does not draw the conclusion that Protestantism should give over the defense of its fundamental doctrines and preach the ethical quadrilateral, but no other one is possible in the light of the errors which he has accepted.

**CHRISTIAN VOCABULARY.** Henry Nelson Wieman has touched on a point which is of concern to Christian writers, and more, to Christian readers, in his article, "On Using Christian Words," [*Journal of Religion*, 20 (July 1940) 3, 257-269]. It has been a matter of complaint and irritation that in recent years sincerely believing Christians have been exposed to a hypocritical use of Christian words. To cite one instance, authors who deny the Divinity of Christ have spoken of His deity, Divinity, Sonship of the Father, excluding from these phrases the old Christian content. It is this kind of usage which the article advises in part. To the author there are five ways of using Christian words: a) one may repudiate the word when the idea is repudiated; b) one may repudiate the word and the idea, and crusade against both; c) one may select a suitable vocabulary; d) one may retain the old vocabulary for its emotional and traditional value; e) one may retain the old word because of underlying truths in the religious order and one may use the old words for the new meanings which have been substituted for the old tenets; the justification of this procedure is found in Value as the criterion of truth. Obviously, written and spoken language would be far more honest and intelligible if such modernistic distortions of Christian words were not thus foisted on a public which is not always aware that the change has been made.

## ON THE ONE GOD

**THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.** The pertinence of the adage about the shoemaker and his last was never more noticeable than lately in the most public profession of atheism ever made by a scientist in America. On September 10, 1940 Albert Einstein's communication to a religious conference was read. Much comment might be passed on the very fact that it was read, that it received much publicity—all of it undoubtedly harmful, and that less space was devoted in the press to those who called attention to the scientist's paralogisms and errors. Professor Einstein is no philosopher, as



is clear from the fact that the constancy and order of the universe are proofs to him that there is no God and no free will in man. He is, furthermore, far from being up-to-date in the history of religion and revelation. And, finally, he would seem to be lacking in even elementary philosophical notions when he states that human responsibility is incompatible with Divine omnipotence. It is not important to consider what Professor Einstein has said, since, when he offers proof for his atheism, he is not speaking with professional authority; but it is well to note that conclusions only slightly less dangerous are being held and propagated, though not so boldly, by those who are professionally dedicated to studies which have to do with God and religion.

In the matter of practical religion the attitude of the agnostic is only slightly better than that of the self-convinced atheist. Agnosticism which Catholic theologians and philosophers would call complete is most widespread today even among those who sincerely forward religious movements, because arguments from reason are neglected outside the Church. By those who have deserted reason their condition is not named agnostic because they hope and attempt to find a God through the will, emotions and sentiments, and they continue to publicize their inability to accept the proofs developed in rational theism.

One may read a typical comment on the argument for the existence of God from contingent being in the article of Edwin Ruthven Walker, "Can Philosophy of Religion be Empirical?" [*Journal of Religion*, 20, (July 1940) 3,241-256]. The author states: "The argument from contingent being to necessary ground can be based only on the assumption that the method of pure rationalism can be valid. It proceeds by extending a series to its logical limits after the manner of what is called extrapolation. Now the process of reasoning by extrapolation is a process of negation: concepts of perfect gases, perfect levers, and infinities are defined by denying that limits of actual gases, actual levers, and finite characters can ever be found. Such concepts by their very nature, can have only logical and pragmatic meaning. They can never be known to designate the actual. The idea of a being as necessary ground, therefore, must be pure rational speculation. Such ideas have the value of completing the symmetry of a system of thought. But they cannot mediate interaction with any reality. Hence they cannot affect religious living and cannot be essential to it." It will be seen from this paragraph that the writer has not understood the argument, nor the method of its procedure, nor the strictly logical content of the statement of its conclusion.

Similar confusion and misunderstanding of the cosmological argument will be found in the article of Pierre Guérin, "Les conditions actuelles de

la philosophie religieuse," [*Revue de Théol. et de Philos.* N.S. 28 (Sept. 1940) 116, 262-279]. The writer develops the theme that three great problems face the philosopher today, that is, the philosopher outside the Catholic Church. There is the problem of the origin of religion and its development; there is the problem of the psychological basis of the religious thought and sentiment; and, finally, there is the problem of the existence of God. Guérin states that this third problem is insoluble; it is even contradictory in its terms, since it seeks to use finite existences to prove the Infinite, and the notion of causality and of a First Mover to prove the Immobile and Unproduced. Deprived of proof when he turns without, man is likewise unable to prove a God by turning within. For, according to Guérin, arguments drawn from considerations of self-realization and self-evaluation cannot attain to the Infinite without falling into the fallacy of the ontological argument.

In view of the uncritical agreement of so many outside the Church that reason cannot prove God, it is not surprising that so thorough a fundamentalist as Edwin Rian is carried into admissions which really destroy fundamental Protestantism. His history, *The Presbyterian Conflict*, recounts how liberalism and naturalism have destroyed orthodox fundamentalism in the American Calvinist groups. Incidentally, in avowing that there must be a return to a sincere belief in a personal God and a revelation of Him in the Bible, the author states that "Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* has shown that the proofs for the existence of God from pure reason, as historically stated, are not conclusive. And even if they were, they would only prove the existence of a finite God. Far better and far sounder is it to presuppose the personal God of the Scriptures and to argue from that impregnable base." (p. 287) The vicious circle in this sort of reasoning is perceptible to rationalists as well as to adherents of a sound philosophy.

It is also a finite God to which the considerations of the activity of a universal cause would lead according to the thought of Julius Seelye Bixler in his book, *Religion for Free Minds*, (Harper, 1940, 248 pp.). The God of Values is wholly other, that is, He is the unknowable God who has become so popular in recent years; the God of existence is, as far as reflections upon nature lead, limited in power. Furthermore, this writer surprises the modern reader by his fear of Manicheism, since he thinks that serious philosophical considerations can lead to the conclusion that the God of existence is dual in nature.

Skepticism concerning the existence of God obviously leads to the lack of a solid basis of morality. It is not surprising, then, that serious thinkers who have accepted the modern agnosticism have sought supposititious supports elsewhere. For the Barthians and others it is the "wholly other" God,

vaguely and insecurely sought through revelation; for certain writers whose skepticism of Biblical revelation is complete a basis of morality is sought in the blind evolution of the race, and the history of mankind seems to them to confirm their hopeful view. An example may be cited from the articles of Jean Paulus, of the French school of thought.

In his article, "Le thème du Juste Souffrant dans la pensée grecque et hébraïque," [*Revue de l'histoire des religions*, (Musée Guimet, 121 Jan. 1940) 1, 18-66] Paulus writes that man, confronted with the sight of the virtuous man who suffers, may take the view that virtue is to be practiced, in principle and quite without consideration of reward; or, he may conclude that virtue should be practiced, should lead to reward, and that society is obligated to see that reward answer virtue; but further, man sees that society is tardy or incapable or neglectful in the matter of reward, and yet rises to the ideal stage where, in spite of all, he loves and practices virtue. The writer now turns to history to inquire how man has solved the enigma.

In the earliest stages of Biblical history we see that virtue is a matter which has to do with the nation or group; the virtue of the group is supposed to lead to the reward of the group; evil leads to punishment; there is no consideration of the individual. Now this portrait is one-sided; Paulus has neglected to reflect that early Biblical history is primarily the history of a people, that God is dealing with a chosen people and dealing with them in a highly peculiar way. Furthermore, the writer fails to give attention to those events of sacred history in which the individual responsibility is emphasized. Finally, the writer has accepted too unquestioningly the views of Levy-Bruhl on primitive religion.

In *Job* and the *Prophets* a more advanced stage of thought is found, first, in the fact that the accent is passing from the group to the individual, and, secondly, that the connection between virtue and happiness now and between vice and punishment is no longer conceived a necessary one. In certain basic features this same sort of evolution of thought is noticeable in the Greek sources, and in some fundamental views *Job* and Plato are similar. The third and higher stage is reached about two centuries before Christ when the doctrines of resurrection and immortality are developed; these doctrines satisfy the biological urge of man towards happiness as well as they respond to moral exigencies of a sanction. With Janet, the progress of the race is likened to the evolution of the individual. In the assertive stage of morality, which characterizes the infant up to seven or eight years, the milieu of the group is accepted with its moral viewpoints and opinions about virtue and sanction. From then to adolescence there is reflection on the part of the child with the consequent development of his individual views. This leads to the reasoned stage of mature life, which is called the

rational stage by Janet, the consolidated stage by Dupréel, and the dynamic stage by Bergson. The solution of this conflict before the problems of conduct and reward may lead to avowed or hypocritical immoralism, to a conformity to law and precept which is timid, or to courageous submission, and this last stage is the ideal, both of the individual and of the race. The reader of this essay may justly complain that the analogies are too superficial; further, with so many agents available for the building of the characters of nations and individuals, reason for trust in a blind evolution is lacking.

### VENIAL SIN

THE ULTIMATE END OF VENIAL SIN. Theologians should not fail to take account of the excellent article of A. J. McNichol, O.P., entitled "The Ultimate End of Venial Sin," [*The Thomist*, 2 (July 1940) 3, 373-409]. If the ultimate end of an act is a creature, the act is a mortal sin; if the ultimate end of a sinful act is God, the act is blasphemy, and hence a mortal sin. There is a problem, therefore, in the compatibility of venial sin with a state of Grace. A frequent solution of this problem is sought through calling *beatitudo in communi* the ultimate end of venial sin, and thus, strictly, the ultimate end is neither God nor creature. This solution is inadequate, since the happiness which the will seeks in a venial sin is a concrete happiness; this is a creature. Hence, it seems that the sin should be considered mortal.

Father McNichol develops his solution of the problem by following out boldly the lines indicated in Saint Thomas. Two passages are especially pertinent, *Summa*, Prima Secundae, qq. 88-89 and *De Malo*, qu. 7. The intellect of the angels is intuitive; they will the means and the end in a single act; hence, venial sin is not possible in their state, as neither was it possible to man in the state of innocence. Man in his present state has a discursive intellect; he can and does deliberate separately about the end of his acts and the means thereto. In venial sin there is inordination with respect to the means, but not with respect to the end. In order to show that this general statement is verified in the case of every venial sin, the various kinds are discussed.

Venial sins which are committed through lack of deliberation are infra-rational; they are imperfect human acts; and there is no need of seeking an ultimate end of such. When we come to consider the deliberate venial sin, we must distinguish with Aquinas the two functions of the discursive intellect, the superior reason (*ratio superior*), which is the intellect when engaged upon eternal verities, and the inferior reason (*ratio inferior*), which is the same faculty when engaged upon contingent things. Man can sin venially in both cases. But it seems better to consider each venial sin separately.

When the inferior reason is an operative faculty before the sin, then this venial sin is ordained to God *habitually*; that is, the ultimate end is God insofar as He is intended in all acts which are performed in a state of Grace. In 2, 2, qu. 24, a. 10, ad 2, Saint Thomas states this: *Quod amatur in peccato veniali, propter Deum amatur habitu, etsi non actu.* But Cajetan, Gonet and Billuart are too timid when they reduce the meaning of these words to a statement of the compatibility of Grace and venial sin. The text obviously states more than this. It means that in a venial sin man directs his action either actually or virtually to his temporal happiness or to his own perfection; if he is in a state of Grace then this intention is *habitually* subordinated to God through the influence of the presence of Charity.

In venial sins which follow the activity of the superior reason, the distinction between the will-act of fruition and that of use is important; the object of fruition is the end, that of use is the means. Venial sin involves inordination about the means, mortal sin about the end. Those sins whose objects are contingent means to the end, do not destroy one's habitual perfection; for the desire of a contingent means to an end does not destroy the desire of the end itself. In venial sin inordinate temporal happiness is selected as a means, but it is loved and selected only as a means, and hence, to stop here, and not to love it as an end, means the avoiding of mortal sin. Thus, while venial sin is not, either actually or virtually, ordained to God as a last end, neither is it ordained to a creature as a last end, and this prevents it from falling into the category of mortal sins.

Having developed the solution of the problem thus far, Father McNichol is aware of the common teaching that in every human act man is moved by at least the virtual desire of his last end; this principle is applicable to venial sin, and hence apparently undoes the proposed solution. The author avoids the difficulty by calling attention to a distinction concerning the last end which is not mentioned in treatises on the human act. Venial sin is the particular act of an individual; hence, the last end to be considered is not the last end in general, but the last end in particular. In this are two formalities, the concrete thing itself, and the aspect under which it is desired by the individual will; these are the material and formal objects. "We therefore distinguish between the last end in general and the last end in particular; and this latter is further subdivided into formal and material last end; and thus we do not identify the last end in general with the formal last end, as so many authors do." This distinction of the last end is entirely in the objective sense; commonly enough the formal last end is understood as subjective.

After establishing this three-fold distinction the author applies it to the principle concerning the virtual desire of the last end in every human act.

Man necessarily wills, at least virtually and in all his acts, his formal last end; but he does not necessarily will virtually his material last end. The author now sums up before concluding his solution. "1) Man necessarily, in all his fully deliberate acts, is moved, at least virtually, by the desire of his formal last end, which is his supreme good insofar as it brings him full perfection and happiness; 2) He does not necessarily ordain all his acts, even virtually, to his material last end, which, for the man in the state of Grace, is God; 3) He is bound to do this in virtue of the moral law, natural and Divine, in all his acts; 4) Venial sins cannot, of their very nature be thus ordained to God; 5) In the man in the state of Grace, they are habitually ordained to God insofar as they are either actually or virtually ordained to the formal last end, which is habitually recognized and accepted as being attainable in its fullness only by union with God, so that man has subordinated his happiness and perfection to God; this subordination is effected by Divine Charity, which thus exercises an indirect influence even in venial sins. It may be more accurate to say that it exercises only a mediate influence over venial sins, but an indirect one over man's happiness; 6) Hence, venial sin is, generically, a human act deprived of that virtual ordination to God which it should possess, though habitually ordained to Him as the material last end of the sinner."

The answer to the question, then, concerning the last end of venial sin is that it has the same end as that of the meritorious act in all three aspects of the last end. But the manner of ordaining meritorious acts and venial sins to the material last end is different; the meritorious act is ordained to it at least virtually, while the venial sin is ordained to it only habitually. Thus, the last end of venial sin is not a creature, and hence the difficulty about mortal sin vanishes. The last end is God, but God is only habitually desired in the act; He is not virtually desired and there is no merit.

**THE CONFESSION OF VENIAL SINS.** In the canonical commentary, *Periodica* [28 (Feb. 1939) 5-24] Michael Fabregas, S.J., considers the question "Estne opportunum sola venialia confiteri?" The merit of the article is found in the canonical parts. Father Fabregas takes up for discussion Pius VI's condemnation of the 39th Declaration of Pistoia: *Declaratio synodi de peccatorum venialium confessione, quam optare se ait non tantopere frequentari, ne nimium contemptibiles reddantur hujusmodi confessiones:—temeraria, perniciosa, sanctorum et piorum praxi a sacro concilio Tridentino probatae contraria.* (Denzinger-Bannwart, 1539) The Pistoians had declared that such confessions, desirable in themselves, should not be too frequently made, lest contempt follow familiarity. The Pope condemns this attitude as rash—frequenting the confessional does not of itself lead to the alleged danger.

Again, the article contains a clearly argued section on the power of the Church to impose an obligation to confess venial sins. It is disputed among theologians whether the Church can impose this obligation directly; it is admitted that she can do so indirectly. In fact the Popes have prescribed confession among the conditions of a Jubilee, and Benedict XIV may be cited for explicitly including those who had only venial sins to confess. It is implicitly included in the general precept of confession of the Jubilee indulgence, since, presumably many of those gaining the indulgences have only venial sins. Moreover, the power of the Church to impose the obligation is seen in the canons (125, 595) which prescribe that Ordinaries and religious superiors must see to it that their subjects confess frequently (twice a month, weekly, etc.). The author states that to satisfy the canons those charged therein can impose confession on their subjects, many of whom have presumably only venial sins.

The article of Father Fabregas is introduced by a brief review of pertinent doctrinal points; but a more complete discussion of the topic will be found in J. Beumer, S.J.,'s essay on the confession of devotion in post-Tridentine theology under the title, "Die spekulative Durchdringung der Andachtsbeichte in der nachtridentinische Scholastik," [*Scholastik*, 13 (1938) 72-86]. The confession made out of devotion (involving, therefore, only venial sins) was a medieval practice; *perfectionis est confiteri venialia* was Aquinas' phrasing of it, and through the preaching of the Friars, especially the Franciscans, the frequenting of the confessional became widespread.

Beumer omits here the fuller history which may be found in the book of A. Teetaert, O.M.Cap., *La confession aux laïques dans l'église latine depuis le huitième siècle jusqu' au quatorzième siècle*. During the middle ages a custom sprang up of confessing to laymen; at first, only venial sins were told, but later the submission of mortal sins was added. This appears to have been an imitation for the laity of the humiliation of public confession which is found in the monastic practice of the chapter; a work falsely attributed to Saint Augustine, *De vera et falsa paenitentia*, gave it vogue. A few theologians fell into the error of attributing some efficacy to lay absolution; Saint Thomas, while he is clear that the layman has no power to absolve, favored the practice in cases of necessity, in order to insure that the penitent do all that in him lay for the forgiveness of his sins. It is to be noticed that Saint Thomas did not complete that part of the *Summa* where the question should be treated, and that his opinion on the advisability of lay-confession is quoted from the earlier work which was used to eke out the *Summa*. (Confer, *Supplementum Tertiae* qu. 8, art. 1 & 2). It was the later emphasis of Scotus on the part played in the sacrament by the priest's absolution which caused the custom to lapse.

Father Beumer further brings out that some of the theologians before Trent, and a few after the Council, made a confession of devotion obligatory at Easter for those who had not committed mortal sins. This earlier teaching has yielded to the common opinion of the moralists today who hold that the subject of the law contained in Canon 906 is any one of the faithful who has the use of reason and is conscious of a mortal sin which has not yet been declared in a valid confession. Since a consideration of post-Tridentine theology is the topic of Beumer's essay, he has no place for the many problems which faced the early and later Scholastics. An account of these difficulties and obscurities was published many years ago in an article which is still inspiring, by Doctor A. Landgraf, "Grundlagen für ein Verstandnis der Busslehre der Früh- und Hochscholastik," (*Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, 1927).

Beumer shows that after Trent the theologians agreed that the sacrament could remit sins even when only venial sins were submitted, and that it remitted them *ex opere operato*. But there were disputes; the Thomistic theologians, arguing out of the 87th Question of the Third Part, held that the sacrament worked its effect mediately; it aroused Charity, and Charity wrought the remission of venial sin. Other theologians held to the view that the remission is directly and immediately effected. Again, several opinions were put forth when it was asked how the sacrament effected the remission. The rigorists answered that attrition as such is insufficient in the sacrament; in the sacrament it may become contrition; this answer is no longer given by any school. Suarez, in saying that attrition with the sacrament can remit, providing there is a removal of any formal complacency in the venial sins, seems to admit the possibility of true attrition without retraction of the complacency. Others held that a certain grade of intensity of attrition was required, while a fourth school, many of its followers Jesuits, held that, providing true attrition was in the heart of the sinner, the sacrament remitted venial sins directly and immediately.

The best contribution of the later theologians was their development of the idea that the sacrament, conferred on one already in a state of Grace, increases Sanctifying Grace. Here was a new motive for the reconfession of mortal sins already remitted and for the confession of devotion. Again, the idea was developed that the Grace conferred in the sacrament could be specific, that is, provide help against the weaknesses which caused habitual venial sins. Further, theoretically, the proof was developed that if the sacrament remits venial sins, confessed along with mortal sins, then it can remit venial sins alone, and it was also noted that the satisfaction imposed on the sacrament, as a part of the sacrament, wrought its effect *ex opere operato*, and thus differs in effect from extra-sacramental works.



Some of the post-Tridentine theologians confused matters by saying that the sacramentals also worked *ex opere operato*. Billuart shed the best light on this topic by stating that when the sacramentals operated in the remission of venial sins they operated *ex opere operantis ecclesiae*.

