

## THE VATICAN ENCYCLOPEDIA<sup>1</sup>

A quick glance through this set has made a number of readers remark that the work is too much of an Italian encyclopedia. One expects a Catholic encyclopedia, no matter what the language, to be truly international; a fortiori, a Vatican encyclopedia. Moreover, it might seem that the editors of this work were trying to compete with the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, trying to produce, as it were, a smaller but up-to-date edition of that work. Why range over a wide variety of topics when other general and special encyclopedias have done the work so well? Why such an emphasis on the arts, even to the extent of including technical articles like "Affresco"?

We disagree with such a criticism and we reply by submitting the following propositions which can be demonstrated only by a careful perusal of some of the volumes. (1) It is most heartening indeed to have a *summa humanistica* which is written entirely from the Catholic point of view and which at the same time is modern, expert, and beautifully produced. Unlike the new Spanish and the new French Catholic encyclopedias which purpose to be surveys of Catholic doctrine, and unlike recent editions of other general encyclopedias which are only partial revisions of earlier works, this is an entirely new survey of human knowledge. Therefore, the whole point of view of the editorial choices and supervisions, as well as the actual writing, is worth studying. For instance, the sciences are covered adequately and expertly, but it is obvious that science is subordinated to other more humane forms of human endeavor. Americans might well object to the fact that Washington is covered by one page and two pictures, while forty-three pages and countless pictures are devoted to Rome. But then, what is the proportion of Washington to Rome?

2) Granted the Italian language and the fact that most of the contributors are Italian, still the important articles are written by internationally recognized scholars; and we often find that an ingenious compromise has been worked out for some article which might well be done by a non-Italian author. For example, the article, "Giudaismo," was written by Eugenio Zolli.

3) An exact check of articles in several places shows that the coverage of topics is definitely international in scope and editorial interest. In the section, SAL—, we find the persons, places, and things written up in this proportion: Italian, 22; non-Italian, 28; words of historical, literary, scientific, or religious interest, 27. In a section where there are no Italian words and few names,

<sup>1</sup> *Enciclopedia cattolica*. 12 vols. Città del Vaticano: Ente per l'Enciclopedia cattolica e per il Libro cattolico, 1948-54. \$253.00.

HAA— to HAZ—, we find this proportion: American, 6; English, 10; French, 17; German, 27; Italian, 1; other, 26; words of historical, literary, scientific, and religious interest, 27.

4) Calling upon Roman scholars has made possible an up-to-date work. In "Grazia," the bibliography has titles published in 1950, while the *Imprimatur* of the volume is dated 1951. This quality is particularly notable in articles about authors who have died in very recent years: Joseph Greth, Stanislaus Woywod, Joseph de Ghellinck, Antonio Arregui, Vincent Bainvel, Willa Cather, Joseph Turmel, Camille Callewaert, Nikolaj Berdjaev, Joseph Stalin. Following general practice, there are almost no articles about living persons; one exception is Pope Pius XII.

Librarians and theological students will appreciate the work because of the abundance of information about authors, journals, societies, outstanding documents, legal phrases, hymns, famous books, and series. They will perhaps be amused by a few errors and defects. Under "Georgetown" there is no article but a reference to "Woodstock"; but "Woodstock" does not appear in the later volume. In the body of the article, "Stati Uniti," the one church pictured is the chapel of Duke University and the one air-view of a city is a photo of Omaha. But fortunately there are two pictures of churches designed by Barry Byrne in the plates (Plate 83, vol. XI).

A useful feature is the number of articles about outstanding journals, mostly theological, and series, like the *Texte und Untersuchungen*. These range from many brief notes that give little more than the necessary bibliographical details to comparatively long articles on some of the journals that have made history; see, e.g., the article "Avenir(L')." Even centers of scholarly work are noticed, e.g., "Uppsala, Scuola Esegetica di"; and, of course, the learned societies like the Görres Gesellschaft. These English-language periodicals are not noticed: *Australasian Catholic Record*, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, *Clergy Review*, *Eastern Churches Quarterly*, *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, *Liturgical Arts*, *Orate Fratres* (now *Worship*), *Review for Religious*, *Review of Politics*, *Speculum*, *Theological Studies*, *Thomist*, and *Thought*. There is a wealth of material about Catholic authors and, as far as we have been able to check, the information provided is accurate. There are also many biographies of Protestant theologians and historians, both well known and obscure, e.g., Albert Hauck, Thomas Adams, Johann Gerhard, etc. One would expect to find biographies of outstanding authors; one is delighted to find any number of short articles about relatively unimportant people who have made their mark by one deed or one book. For instance, there is Thomas Abel who contrary to all expectations turned upon his master, Henry VIII, to defend his Queen, Catherine of

Aragon.<sup>2</sup> A typical biography of an author is that of Fernand Cabrol. It is only a half-column but we are given the essential facts of his life, a full list of his works, and a bibliography of three items about him.

The following pages of this survey appraise more specifically the contribution of the Vatican Encyclopedia to a number of scientific disciplines which concern the theologian.

## I

In the field of the Bible a wide range of subjects is covered and the general standard of the articles is high. The articles of particular interest to Catholic theologians are well and fully treated, e.g., canonicity, inerrancy, and inspiration. Especially noteworthy are the articles by S. Lyonnet, S.J., of the Biblical Institute. He treats among other subjects of *Critica biblica* and *Generi letterari*. In two marvellously compact articles he includes a history of the Church's attitude to these two subjects and gives a clear and accurate account of the attitude which the magisterium has now assumed. From these accounts we gain an idea of the difficulties the Church had to face before it could reach the liberal attitude expressed in *Divino afflante Spiritu* and the Letter of the Biblical Commission to Cardinal Suhard.

There are good sections on biblical chronology of the Old Testament and on the Semitic languages; the short section on biblical archaeology can be supplemented by reference to individual sites, e.g., Mari, Lachish, etc. Nearly all of the important biblical and Near Eastern journals have been described in individual articles by title.

Naturally, greater prominence is given to the Catholic positions, but the work of non-Catholic scholars has not been slighted. While some of their views are rejected, the greatest non-Catholic workers in this field have been treated and their merits have been fully recognized. Noteworthy in this respect is the article on Wilhelm Bousset.

The treatment of some of the trends in biblical studies is calm and objective, though at times necessarily critical. The article on Form Criticism by Penna is a model of what an encyclopedia article of this kind should be. The "debater's tone" crops up only occasionally; it is, e.g., found in two articles, on eschatology and "Gemeindetheorie," both by the same author. Here an attempt is made to reject positions by an appeal to the metaphysics behind them rather than by critical arguments. Such a treatment may satisfy Catholics but it will not conduce towards a meeting of minds.

The articles are brief, yet not to the sacrifice of clarity; each article is backed by bibliographies which are as up to date as possible and are truly

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Garrett Mattingly, *Catherine of Aragon* (Boston, 1941), p. 277.

international. Some of the *OT* articles on biblical books and doctrines tend to be too conservative; others, e.g., the article on Isaiah, present fairly the developments in Catholic circles. The tendency of articles on the individual *NT* books, e.g., the Gospels, the Synoptic problem, Acts, etc., is conservative as to dating and authenticity; this is probably as it should be in a work of this kind.

One of the most interesting features in the Encyclopedia is the space given to the great exegetes, both ancient and modern, of all faiths and of none. Laudable, too, is the tact with which engaging sidelights in the lives of some distinguished exegetes have been handled. Thus, Billerbeck's debt to Strack in the writing of the famous *Kommentar* is summed up in the clause, "benché scarsa ne sia la collaborazione [of Strack]." It is interesting, too, to learn that at the time of Fr. Hetzenauer's death a theology of the New Testament which the deceased had readied for the press "è andata smarrita."

## II

The survey of patristic literature has been conceived and executed with singular felicity. Guglielmo Zannoni, "Padri della Chiesa," deals with the concept of Father, the authority of the Fathers, the patristic age, the study of the Fathers as patrology (historical-literary interest; life and writings) and patristics (doctrinal aspect; proofs demonstrative of dogma), and their language. Erik Peterson, professor in Rome's Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, has a compact summary of "Patrologia e patristica," mostly bibliographical, which takes us from Jerome's *De viris illustribus* (392) to Dekkers' *Clavis patrum latinorum* (1951) on the histories of doctrine and literature, and indicates too the more significant publications of patristic texts.

The article on "Padri Apostolici" by Peterson is jejune, but Peterson and Michele Pellegrino have handled the individual writers and documents in lengthier separate articles. So, too, the brief survey of the second-century Greek apologists in Giuseppe Monti's treatment of apologetical literature (I, 1659-61) is supplemented by individual articles, mostly by Peterson, Pellegrino, and Antonio Ferrua, with Justin handled by P. Künzle, of the Vatican Library.

The articles on the later, more distinguished Fathers and ecclesiastical writers have for authors the more distinguished contemporary patrologists: van den Eynde on Irenaeus; Békés on Clement of Alexandria; Vagaggini on Origen; Pellegrino on Cyprian, Tertullian, and Basil; Jugie on Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Cyril of Alexandria; Cataudella on Gregory of

Nazianzus and John Chrysostom; Daniélou on Gregory of Nyssa; Ortiz de Urbina on Ephraem; Fallar on Ambrose; Cavallera on Jerome; Boyer on Augustine; Madoz on Isidore of Seville; Hausherr on Maximus Confessor; Gordillo on John Damascene. More than fifty notices are devoted to eminent patrologists.

Put together, the articles add up to an unusually good manual of patrology. The life, literary activity, and theological significance of a patristic author can be discovered here with relative ease, and the bibliographical entries are in general dependable guides to more serious study. At times the summaries of doctrine, such as the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria (III, 1721-23), are masterpieces of compression. Regrettably, the space allotted to individual authors is not always in proportion; thus, fifteen columns are given over to Clement of Alexandria, and only four to Origen. Some of the bibliographies are disappointing; that on Irenaeus, e.g., is much too short, and that on Athanasius stops with 1936.

The most extended patristic article (fifty columns) is devoted to Augustine. Regrettably, Boyer pays very little attention to the Plotinian influence (among others) on Augustine's conversion, and the controversy on the nature of that conversion is not directly mentioned; it does receive an oblique mention as a controversy on the relation of the Cassiciacum dialogues with the *Confessions*, and even here Alfarc's important work, refuted by Boyer himself, is not alluded to. Of Augustine's writings, only the more important are listed; and rightly so. On the disputed facets of Augustine's doctrine Boyer generally presents the various views, then his own. Thus, on Augustinian illumination, he presents the opinions of Hessen, Grabmann, Gilson, and Portalié, before offering his own. Despite its general excellence as an encyclopedia article, a disproportionate amount of space is given to a synthetic presentation of Augustine's doctrine in our categories, not his. Little attempt is made to situate him in his milieu, to expose the influences that moved him, to present his teaching with the nuances with which it came from his pen, to indicate the dangers and lacunae which were to make him a favorite author of Jansenius and others. Perhaps this is too much to expect from an encyclopedia.

### III

In the realm of dogmatic theology the quality of the articles is not of uniform excellence. In the article on limbo, e.g., the first part, on the limbo of the fathers, is well done and reveals an awareness of recent studies on the descent of Christ into hell. The second part is less impressive, with no mention of Cajetan's view or of recent attempts to get away from the limbo

of infants (though one or two of the works listed in the bibliography would give information on this point).

Christology is, in general, competently handled by dogma professors, mostly Italian, some of whom are well known. Msgr. Pietro Parente has a lion's share of the work (cf. important articles on the Incarnation, hypostatic union, psychology of Christ, redemption, priesthood of Christ, etc.). His articles are clear in their divisions of the matter, solid in analyzing the problems, and his extensive erudition is reflected in the bibliographies, which are not always, however, of uniform quality. He is generally objective, but there is one notable departure from objectivity, out of place in a general encyclopedia. In the article, "Psicologia di Gesù Cristo," about two-thirds of the space is devoted to his own theory on the psychological unity of Christ. This is a highly controversial question, and Parente's adversaries get only a bare mention of their names and works, without even a brief statement of what they hold. In fact, there is no explicit indication that the question is disputed among Catholic theologians.

Worthy of special mention is the article, "Santità di Cristo e di Maria," by R. Laurentin. This is a fine comparison of the sanctity of our Lord and that of His Mother. The articles on the principal themes of Christology can be supplemented by many of the excellent articles on Christological heresies (several by Jugie), on ecumenical councils, on individual Fathers and theologians.

Two entries on sacramental theology merit special commendation. Msgr. Piolanti's articles, "Sacramenti" and "Messa," not only detail the Church's tradition but also incorporate the best of recent scholarly reflection. He reforms the cadre that governed the treatment of the causality of the sacraments and the specific nature of sacramental grace. The former dispute had reached a new low of unprofitable rehearsal, until theologians in their review of the sources presented a fuller analysis of typology and signification. The question of the nature of sacramental grace had fared worse; it was short and juridical. Piolanti, with many others, defines this grace as the dynamic orientation of the soul's supernatural life to the purposes of each sacrament.

Piolanti's study of the Mass is thorough and felicitous. An aprioristic, and especially a Lugonian, definition of sacrifice can slant the whole Scholastic discussion of the essence of sacrifice. Relying more on the patristic and medieval tradition, the author provides a more meaningful analysis of the *mysterium fidei*.

Of use for the dogmatic theologian will be the indices, especially the list of theologians, referring to short biographical articles on scholars as recent

as Vonier and de la Taille. The indices on liturgy, iconography, archaeology, and folk-lore will help show how the dogmas of the faith became a part of human and Christian life. The volumes abound in artistic representations of the mysteries of faith, and the principal dogmatic articles have a concluding section on the iconography of the theme in question, e.g., the articles on judgment, hell, and our Lady.

There are articles on a number of important encyclicals. (Encyclicals, like other noteworthy documents, the hymns from the breviary, etc., are entered under the first word of the Latin title.) Each gives a brief summary of the need for and the meaning of the document. It is rather noticeable that here the bibliographies are skimpy: *Quadragesimo anno* has one entry, a French work published in 1932; *Rerum novarum* has three Italian titles, although one of these is a bibliography of 1929; *Casti connubii* has four, one of which is a bibliography of 1932. The article, "Encicliche," which is a division of "Lettere Pontificie," gives a brief account of the origin, form, and doctrinal value of the papal encyclicals.

#### IV

It would not be a fair test to judge an Italian encyclopedia by its articles on Protestant topics. However, even if we make this test, the Encyclopedia under consideration does not come off badly. The articles on Protestantism, Anglicanism, Lutheranism, Methodism, and Presbyterianism are short, but this is in accord with the valid rationale of the whole work. In the bibliographies attached to the articles we find valuable references, even if more valuable references have been omitted. The minor but glaring defect of older Continental lexica, the hideous misspelling of English words, is quite absent from the new endeavor.

The virtues of the treatment of Protestant themes are their clarity, general reliability, and synthetic succinctness. Old errors are not repeated nor resuscitated, and there is a firm grasp on fundamental issues. This is particularly true of the article on Protestantism in general. There is no overt tone of hostility in any of the articles; rather an impression of scholarly objectivity is created and sustained.

The relatively long article on Luther by Bendiscioli, although not wholly flattering to the subject, strives to be objective and fair. Unfortunately, the article must also deal with Lutheranism and on this subject not too much is given. Practically nothing is told us about contemporary Lutheran positions.

This appears to be the shortcoming of all the articles on Protestant themes. The writers seem to be dealing with abstractions rather than with vital forces. Much is given, and well given, concerning the historical origins of di-

verse Protestant positions, but it is hard to see how any reader can find in the whole work the actual meaning and vital existence of Protestantism. The writers all too briefly describe it as if its relevance were not high, and there is no manifestation of any confrontation with Protestantism as an actual spirit here and now. One gets the impression that it is not known under this aspect.

Even in the article on the Waldensians ("Valdesi") not too much is told us about the living representatives. In fact, we are told that they are not important. This seems true enough, but it would be desirable that an Italian dictionary should give us something on the present-day doctrine, order, and liturgy of an exclusively Italian phenomenon. If this is true in the treatment of the Valdesi who are at home in Italy, we cannot expect too much from the articles on Protestantism elsewhere. Only a picayune point will be made here. In the article on Methodism we are informed that, instead of bishops, the Methodists have superintendents. Now the unescapable fact in American Methodism is the high visibility of Methodist Bishops. This is a small detail, but indicative of a lack of acquaintance with living Methodism.

The over-all criticism to be made is that the Encyclopedia deals with Protestantism abstractly or as something in past history. Concerning the Protestantism of our day too little is offered to the reader. This is unfortunate, because it will strengthen the invalid belief of so many Catholics who think that the doctrines and positions of the sixteenth-century Reformers are the nucleus of contemporary Protestant life. Not enough justice has been done to the tremendous evolution within Protestantism.

##### V

Since it is the latest encyclopedia published, from the historical point of view it is theoretically the best. The editors have been able to profit by the efforts of older works and to add to them not only in the important matter of more up-to-date bibliographies but also by putting to use the constantly increasing store of surer knowledge of the past of the Church and society. The reader immediately finds new material and the omission of errors of fact in the shorter as well as the longer articles. To mention only a few cases: "Hedwig," "Antonio Maria Zaccaria," "Placidus," "Dionisio," "Croce," "Quattro Tempi." In many of the hagiographical articles there is a subdivision, "Folk-lore"; this is true also within other articles, e.g., "Gesù Cristo," "Corpus Domini," "Croce," "Adamo," "Miracolo," "Roma." Where needed, part of an article has been written by a different contributor, e.g., "Iconografia" under "Geremia." There is convenient arrangement of



material; an article on pre-Christian German religion is with the article on Germany rather than with material on the ancient world or on comparative religion. The longer, more difficult articles are well divided, each part being done by a separate author and each having its own bibliography.

Unfortunately, the author of the article, "Americanismo," seems to take it for granted that some American ecclesiastics went beyond the bounds of orthodoxy in matters apologetical and ascetical, if not in dogma. This thesis has never been proved and, since there have not been wanting efforts to prove it, it may be safely said to be incapable of proof. Doubtless it will be long before this fact is accepted by everyone. The author defines Americanism as a religious doctrine and movement of liberal and naturalistic inspiration which grew up within Catholicism of nineteenth-century America. The later statement that the most lively polemics were in France seems sufficient indication that the centers of doctrine and movement were not in the United States.

The Catholic Action articles are informative, but here a rather narrow editorial point of view has excluded material about groups and organizations which are not Italian. In treating of the place of the laity within the Church, the attitude seems to be entirely juridical. On the other hand, not all the doctrinal material on the spiritual life is beyond the educated layman. The articles on important topics are clear, much shorter than those in the theological encyclopedias and yet in their own way just as complete. Most of the contributions concerned with aspects of the spiritual life are interesting, informative, and even inspiring.

## VI

The articles on canon law are numerous. Nor are they limited to every-day matters, but include likewise points of legal erudition of interest to the more educated public, for whom the selection seems quite satisfactory. The treatment is consistently thorough and detailed. Without becoming involved in controverted issues, the authors manage to present an adequate popular concept of the law, not only as to basic notions but with historical development and ramifications throughout the Code. These articles are the work of competent writers, of the clergy and the laity, generally professors of moral theology or canon law in various universities throughout Italy, or practicing advocates of the Rota. Many of the contributors are well known internationally in canonical circles.

The contributions in the field of moral theology maintain in general a high standard of excellence. Thus, the study of "Narcoanalisi" is a fine summary of a topic much discussed. Controverted aspects of the problem are fairly

presented, and the scientific facts involved are accurately given. The article was up to date at the time of publication, but there have been subsequent developments (e.g., a papal allocution and several other important publications).

An exception to the high level of scholarship on moral topics is the article on "Alcoholismo." The presentation is definitely dated, and not merely because the volume in which it appears was published in 1948. The author makes no distinction between mere excessive drinking and genuine alcoholism. He attributes to alcoholism physical effects which modern science denies, and dubious social effects as well; he maintains, e.g., that "80 percent of crimes committed in England and the USA are caused by alcohol." Nothing is offered on the cure of alcoholism; here mention might have been made of the drugs ACTH, disulfiram, etc. The bibliography lists no titles from the United States, and the sole English report dates from 1899.

## VII

It should be obvious from the above that the editors of the *Enciclopedia cattolica* have been at pains to assign articles, as far as possible, to experts. Moreover, the editors have not hesitated to ask the experts to do very brief articles; cf. the ten-line notice, "De Laude Martyrii," written by Erik Peterson. With few exceptions the contributions are signed and each volume has a list of contributors, giving position and city of residence.

The art editors have been ingenious in locating apt, unusual, interesting illustrations; the art work is rarely trite or ordinary and the printing of text, illustrations, and plates is superb. There are countless illustrations taken from the miniatures of illuminated manuscripts, from documents, from the title pages of famous books, and from little known but remarkable art objects. For "Giubileo" there is a photograph of the Bull of Boniface VIII of February 22, 1300, declaring the Jubilee indulgence; this is the first Christian Jubilee of which we have precise record. For "Anima" there is a thirteenth-century mosaic of Christ taking up the soul of Mary. On Plate 86 of Vol. I an air-view of midtown New York and a picture of a pueblo on an Arizona mountain-top are juxtaposed. Under "Goa" is a photo of a hut which was a chapel in Francis Xavier's time and in which the Saint offered Mass. An interior view of Castel Sant' Angelo replaces the stereotyped view. Some of the color reproductions tend to be gaudy, but others, such as that (under "Paolo Apostolo") of the mural of Paul's conversion by Michelangelo in the Vatican Cappella Paolina, cannot be surpassed. The portraits placed with biographies are usually excellent; so, e.g., the portrait of John Keble or the two of La Mennais, one as priest, one as apostate.

The most noteworthy single defect of the Encyclopedia is the lack of an alphabetical index. The seminary mind was present at least to the extent that the editors decided to include only a classified schedule of topics and names in place of a complete index. The former has some advantages, of course, and it would be very useful together with an alphabetical index. For example, there is the list of liturgical books which is Part IV of the schedule, "Liturgia"; the names of the scholars, artists, etc., are listed with each field of endeavor; in fact, under "Musica" the list of musicians is much greater than the list of topics. This is all to the good. By the same token, however, the schedule type of index can be slightly misleading. Thus, under Anglo-American literature, William Faulkner is listed, but in the place referred to no information is provided; he is simply included with a single phrase in a list of American authors. One expects to find such an entry in an alphabetical index but not in a classified schedule of topics.

This review has been compiled with the collaboration of a number of scholars too numerous to mention here. Our reaction is one of gratitude for the energy and intelligence and courage which, in spite of poverty, the disruption of war, and internal dissensions of all kinds, have produced a *summa humanistica* that has compelled the admiration of all, even of those who do not share the doctrinal convictions of the editors.

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