

MELITA THEOLOGICA



Vol. XIX

1967

Nos. 1-2

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN 'DEI VERBUM'

THIS is one of the four Dogmatic Constitutions promulgated by the Council. Its importance is shown by its stormy passage through the Council's deliberations: it was one of the very first to be put on the table of the Council and one of the last to be finally approved in its final form. No less than five drafts were presented for the study of the Council Fathers, each one with substantial changes in such a way as to produce a text which would gain the assent of an almost unanimous vote. The history of this document – which, one might say, is the history of the council itself – is important to understand the whole text of the Constitution: one notes the gradual progress of the Council in extricating itself from the straightjacket of formal static abstract conceptual theology of the schools into the liberty of the Biblical and patristic tradition. It is the outcome of two different mentalities, the one bent on preserving the old formulae and condemning anything which smacks of novelty and the other one conscious of the change through which human thinking is passing and of the progress done in the last fifty years or so in positive theology, especially Biblical Interpretation. We limit ourselves to notical interpretation, in chapter three. But first we give an outline of the history of the Constitution.

HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION

The first draft was prepared by the Preparatory Theological Commission and presented to the Council for discussion on November 14th, 1962 and rejected by the majority of the Fathers as too much scholastic in tone, too polemic, uninspiring and rather cool towards free scientific research especially with respect to Biblical Studies. As the majority was just below two thirds Pope John had to intervene. He appointed a new joint commission including the Secretariate for Christian Unity with the express purpose of drafting a new one in a more pastoral and ecumenical spirit.

A second draft was prepared between the first and the second session. It was circularised amongst the Bishops in May 1963; it was again thrown away either because it dealt not with topical questions or because certain themes could not be treated in a Conciliar document of this kind. Hence it was not discussed in the second session.

In March 1964 another commission was appointed to revise the second draft in the light of the 280 amendments received from the Bishops. The amended draft was presented for discussion by the Council Fathers on October 1964. This draft was generally welcomed as more positive in its approach and ecumenical in its spirit. Various observations were presented by the Fathers out of which the fifth and final draft was born. It was approved and promulgated on November 11th, 1965 with only six negative votes.

This bare historical outline shows us with what care and thoroughness the commissions were about their work and succeeded in producing a dynamic document opening new roads and lines of approach for the solution of the problems involved rather than raising defensive barriers around past positions and just immobilizing all further research as the original scheme tended to do; it is a document positive in its content, eschewing any negative attitude, and encouraging for all those who with good will, foresight and zeal go about their work in interpreting Holy Scripture.

The Constitution is divided into six chapters: The first chapter deals with Revelation in itself; the second with its transmission through Holy Scripture and Oral Tradition; the third with Holy Scripture and its interpretation; the fourth with the Old Testament; the fifth with the New Testament and finally the sixth with the place of the Scriptures in the life of the Church.

There were many and manifold points on which the Fathers found it difficult to reach an agreement, but I think that the most difficult was that on the nature of Tradition and its relation to Holy Scripture; the second point was that of the historicity and interpretation of the Gospels; on other points the forward looking Fathers did not find it too much difficult to gain the support of their confreres once misunderstandings and panic were dissipated.

Here we are interested in the principles of Biblical interpretation laid down by the Council in chapter three. To understand their nature and importance one should go back through the history of Catholic Biblical Interpretation and Scholarship in the last sixty years or so.

CATHOLIC BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP IN THE LAST 60 YEARS

Criticism means to examine, to separate, to judge and to classify. Biblical criticism is not to take Biblical documents at their face value, but to examine them as to their textual reliability, their literary form, their historical value. Biblical criticism therefore is the application to the Biblical records of the same principles of interpretation used in the interpretation and evaluation of profane documents, literary or otherwise. Those who admit the sacred nature of the Bible would take this in their consideration; others would simply have them as purely human documents subject to formal error.

This type of Biblical interpretation started within Catholic circles in the 16th century with Andrea Masius (1574). Before that time the Sacred Books were put in one lump and commented upon without paying too much attention to critical problems. The case of Galileo in 1633 alerted theologians and Scriptural scholars to new problems due to scientific observations and discoveries. R. Simon, a Catholic priest is known as the father of biblical literary criticism. Later on another Catholic, Jean D'Astruc, applies literary analysis to Genesis (1766).

Unfortunately this literary criticism, good in itself, was taken over by rationalists to discredit the Bible by reducing it to a purely human document subject to all kinds of errors, real or imaginary. In the middle of the last century the results of scientific discovery and archaeological activity posed new problems for the Biblical Interpreter.

Pope Pius IX included this proposition in his Syllabus of Errors: *The prophecies and miracles set forth and recorded in the Sacred Scriptures are the fiction of poets, and the mysteries of the Christian faith the results of philosophical investigations. In the books of the Old Testament and the New Testament there are contained mythical inventions, and Jesus Christ is Himself a myth.* (EB 74).

The French Bishops proposed that the problem of Biblical Interpretation be tackled by the First Vatican Council and offered their own suggestions. But the Council could not take up the matter; it was inherited by Pope Leo XIII and his successors, who in the course of time have given wise directives through their encyclical letters, decrees and instructions.

In the meantime new problems were arising. Archaeology confirmed the general outline of Biblical history, but new difficulties arose through the mass of new literary and documentary material recovered from the sand and soil of the Near East. Israel is no longer an isolated people,

but henceforth her history, beliefs and customs must be inserted in the full stream of contemporary general culture, the more so since we are in a better position now to establish general chronology and relate it to the Biblical data where possible.

Scholars became aware that the concept of inspiration as formulated in the past aprioristic speculation does not hold good any more; and that not all the biblical documents or records are of the same literary type or form. At the end of the century – after a long time without any exegete to speak of – Catholic Biblical scholars, under the influence of the attacks on Biblical inerrancy, inspiration and sacredness, proposed several solutions for these new basic problems. The Magisterium however rejected these pioneering attempts as insufficient and inadequate, but left the doors open for further research and study.

Leo XIII encouraged these studies by the publication of the great Encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* in 1893, the *Magna Charta* of Biblical studies, established the Pontifical Biblical Commission with the express purpose not only of controlling these studies but also of actively promoting them. He had the idea of founding the Biblical Institute in Rome, which later was founded by Pope St. Pius X in 1908. Moreover Father Lagrange founded the School in Jerusalem and the *Revue Biblique*. Unfortunately the crisis of Modernism checked any steady progress in this field; the decrees emanated in this period to serve as guiding lines were in effect more of a hindrance than a help. Add to this, World War I stopped all activity.

In 1920 Benedict XV published the Encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus* on the occasion of the centenary of St. Jerome's death. He insisted on the reading of the Scriptures and refuted some false interpretations of Jerome's words with respect to Biblical historical writings. It is rather apologetic in tone and with very little of a positive doctrinal value.

Pius XI refused definitely to take any position before Catholic scholars had done their job, that is, gone deeply into the problems involved and prepared the ground for a definite declaration by the Magisterium. He emanated norms for the scientific study of the Scriptures and for their teaching in the Seminaries and other Institutions; took other provisions to put on a solid bases the study and use of the Bible in Christian Life. He personally encouraged all those who dedicated themselves to this study and silenced the obscurantist and the timid.

The words of the Pope went not unheeded by Catholic Biblical Scholars, and the fruits of their labours were harvested by Pope Pius XII and garnered in the crisp latin of the Encyclical Letter: *Divino Afflante*

Spiritu, published on the fiftieth anniversary of the Encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* of Leo XIII on September 30th 1943.

This letter is positive in its approach, dynamic in its vision, and optimistic in its spirit. The best way to tackle the problems involved is to offer positive solutions, putting aside the untenable positions of the past.

The Supreme Pontiff lays down the principles for interpretation: the search for the *literal* sense, that is the meaning actually intended by the sacred writer; to draw out the spiritual sense and the theological doctrine of a given text or whole book; to reach this goal one must make full use of all subsidiary sciences such as philology, archaeology, history, geography etc., taking into full consideration the Magisterium of the Church, the tradition of the Fathers, the *analogia fidei*, the Ancient versions, such as the Septuagint, the Vulgate and others.

The most important contribution in this encyclical was the formulation of the theory on which to base the application of the so called *genera literaria* or literary forms to Biblical interpretation. This principle was proposed by some Biblical exegetes at the beginning of the century to defend the inerrancy of the Scriptures, but it was rejected in the form it was proposed. After thirty years of solid study of the newly discovered oriental literatures, one could reconsider the whole position with more confidence and hope of success.

The basic principle enunciated is that God, the primary author of the Sacred Scriptures, made use, as if of an instrument, of the human writer, the secondary writer, with all his characteristics; such as culture, mentality, defects, language, ways of expressions. This is the theory of instrumentality elaborated by St. Thomas following the steps of the ancient Fathers. Hence God spoke to us in the Bible — and indeed on all occasions of self-revelation — in our own way, much in the same way that his Son took human form and nature through the mystery of the Incarnation. This is the doctrine of St. John Chrysostom: the *sun-kata-basis*, the condescension of God towards man.

The Bible is essentially literature written in a given period of human history; hence the writers must have necessarily made use of all those literary devices and artifices, in common use amongst the peoples to whom they wrote. They had to speak to them in the same language and in the way adapted to their respective mentality and their ways of thinking and speaking. Among these one notes the *genera literaria* or literary forms: thus the Bible becomes a collection of various literary works of art not all of one and the same form. One finds: dramatic dialogue,

poetry, prose, hymns, lamentations, prophecy, narrative, etc. as in any other literature. Thus if one wants seriously to find out the intention of the sacred writer and the meaning he wants to convey one must take into full consideration the literary form used by him. A dramatist expresses a truth in his own special way dictated by the dramatic form; a historian would express the same truth in a totally different way dictated by historical method.

Thus the Biblical interpreter must first of all engage himself not only in textual criticism to establish the authenticity and integrity of the document in his hands, but also in form criticism, that is, he must find out to what literary category or form it belongs, whether it is a psalm, a narrative, a hymn, etc. Thus the literary form of the first eleven chapters of Genesis are absolutely different from those in the rest of the Bible and the more so from our ways of writing about the origin of the world around us.

Obviously these literary forms must not be formulated *a priori* and then imposed on the Biblical text but established *a posteriori* after a careful examination of all the available evidence, biblical and extra-biblical. And as long as a literary form does not contradict the over all inerrancy, it has full right of citizenship within the Biblical library.

This was a great liberating principle which was unanimously acclaimed by Catholic exegetes and non-Catholics alike. These norms gave rise to a renewed Catholic Biblical activity at all levels; scientific, popular literature and also more use of the Bible in pastoral work.

As a consequence of this activity some asked that the decrees promulgated at the beginning of the century with respect to Biblical Criticism be withdrawn; instead of withdrawing them the Holy See gave them a new positive interpretation as in the case of the decree on the Origin of the Pentateuch and the literary form of the first chapters of Genesis in a letter to Cardinal Suhard where the Pontifical Biblical Commission taking into full account all the positive gains in the last fifty years of Pentateuchal criticism admitted the existence of written or oral documents and the special characteristics of the first chapters of Genesis.

But not all were faithful to the lines laid down by the Encyclical and the Ecclesiastical authority had to intervene again, not to disembody the words of the *Divino Afflante Spiritu* but to give them an authentic interpretation and reject, not the methods recommended in the Encyclical, but rather their use to propagate certain postulates of the so called New Theology which tended to consider as simple myths all the Biblical

narratives and admit errors of all kinds in the Biblical texts. These correctives were formulated in the Encyclical: *Humani Generis* of 1950. Instructions were issued regulating the teaching of the Scriptures in the Universities and Seminaries under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation of Studies. Also these were very positive in their approach and optimistic in their spirit.

Work went on on these lines until the convening of the Vatican Council. Just before its assembling in Rome some persons still attached to older forms, but no less moved by their attachment to the Church, made a serious and determined effort to put on the breaks on progressive exegesis. It was the struggle between two mentalities; the one trained on conceptual theology bent on applying aprioristic abstractions to an eminently historical and empirical document as the Biblical Records and the other basing itself on empirical investigation before establishing principles of interpretation. The ecclesiastical authority intervened whenever there was danger of any one of these tendencies getting out of hand.

These same tendencies came to the fore again during the deliberations of the Council: the first scheme proposed represented exclusively the ideas of the conceptualists; the empiricists, so to label them, protested. Out of this struggle there emerged a document of the utmost value for Biblical science harmonizing into a marvellous organic unity the two tendencies: As we shall see it ratified all the positive work done during the last twenty years following the *Divino Afflante Spiritu* and confirming the basic principles of the new methods.

THE PRINCIPLES ENUNCIATED IN THE CONSTITUTION 'DEI VERBUM'

THE TRUTH INTENDED IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

Before finding the methods and means for a correct interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures one must establish firmly the intention of the writer or rather of God in giving us these books. In chapter I the Council affirms that Sacred Scripture is one of the means for the transmission of Revelation, granted by God to man *for his salvation*, hence the object of Divine Revelation is truth in connexion with Divine providence for our salvation. It is this salvific truth that is to be found in Sacred Scripture. In the words of the Council: *Cum ergo omne id quod auctores inspirati seu hagiographi asserunt, retineri debeat assertum a Spiritu Sancto, inde Scripturae libri veritatem, quam Deus nostrae salutis causa Litteris Sacris consignari voluit firmiter, fideliter, et sine errore*

docere profitendi sunt. (§ 11)

The key word or phrase is: *nostrae salutis causa*. This was introduced into the text of the fourth draft. In the first and second draft it is said only that there is no error in Sacred Scripture; in the third it is said that truth is taught without any error: *veritatem sine ullo errore docere profitendi sunt*. In the fourth draft the qualifying adjective *salutaris* is added and we have *veritatem salutarem*. This text was modified again under the pressure of many Fathers and that of the Pope himself into this form: *veritatem, quam Deus nostrae salutis causa Litteris Sacris consignari voluit*. Note also that while in the fourth draft it is said: *sine ullo errore* in the final one we read: *sine errore*.

Many Fathers wished that the object of inerrancy be clearly defined or circumscribed, hence the introduction of the qualifying adjective *salutaris*. But this qualification formulated in this way would have been interpreted as excluding *historical facts* as outside the sphere of inerrancy. Hence the insistence on the part of many Fathers and the Pope himself to change it into a relative clause: the truth, which God intended to put on record in the Sacred Scriptures for our salvation, that is, this truth may be spiritual reality or even historical facts. Thus the ambivalence of the text was removed. The danger of distinguishing between truth relevant to salvation and hence guaranteed by inerrancy, and truth which in itself is indifferent to it and excluded from the sphere of inerrancy, is excluded. Such a distinction, mostly subjective, would have reduced the Biblical inerrancy to a very small affair indeed.

The practical importance of this statement, the first one in any ecclesiastical document in which the writing of the Sacred Scriptures is put in relation to God's salvific providence, may be very far reaching for the interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures especially for Biblical Theology, which forms the main object of modern contemporary Biblical scholarship. This is in line with the teaching formulated already by St. Augustine and St. Thomas.

THE INTENTION OF THE WRITER

From all this it appears how much important it is to establish the intention of the writer as to what he really wanted to say. The object of this intention is to fall within the sphere of salvific truth, which may be mediated to us both through divine words and historical facts, as it is explicitly stated in paragraph 14 of this constitution. Hence the Council passes on to establish certain main principles of interpretation whereby the interpreter may arrive to determine the mind of the sacred writer. In

other words one must establish the literal sense or meaning of a given text.

LITERARY FORMS

We have seen already how the question of literary forms, tackled unsuccessfully at the beginning of the century, stood in abeyance for the first 40 years or so, and how it was taken up again by Pope Pius XII in the Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. We have seen also the aftermath of the words of the Supreme Pontiff with all the disarray in some quarters. Now the Council Fathers face the problem squarely and roundly in the face: *Ad hagiographorum intentionem eruendam inter alia etiam genera litteraria respicienda sunt. Aliter atque aliter veritas in textibus vario modo historicis vel propheticis, vel poeticis, vel in aliis dicendi generibus proponitur et exprimitur.*

The Constitution introduces this statement by reminding us that God spoke to us, *modo humano*, in the manner of men. Now we know that the meaning of a text or document is not discovered by looking only in the dictionary for the meaning of the individual words, and then at grammar to find out their philological relation in the sentence structure and so on, but one should also establish the nature of the literary composition, namely whether it be a technical scientific document, a legal document, a historical document or pure literature. Obviously the same word, say, *justice*, means one thing in a legal document and another in a theological book. A sunrise description in a poem is totally different from the same description in an astronomical work; the word *animal* means one thing in a philosophical treatise and another in a biological textbook.

It is completely wrong therefore to treat the Biblical text under its human aspect as if it were different from other books. Hence one must look at them critically, taking the form in its good sense, that is with a discerning eye, to classify the Biblical books accordingly. Hence one must not stop at philological and linguistical consideration and leave out rhetorical questions. One should go beyond that and classify the Biblical writings according to the literary forms used in the time of their composition, and then interpret them according to the principles at the basis of each literary type.

Thus the Bible from one single book to be interpreted on the same basic literary principles becomes a whole collection of Books including all or almost all possible literary forms: poetry, narratives, hymns, psalms, fiction and so on, each requiring its own principles of interpretation.

It would not be true to say that these distinctions were not admitted in Catholic exegesis before the Council or the *Divino Afflante Spiritu*; but today especially after the last decade's intensive study following on the wake of the Pius XII's encyclical one has to be more careful about them and admit more subtle distinctions, especially when one is treating a narrative text. The Constitution itself admits that not all narratives are of the same type and kind: *vario modo historicis*, we read in the third draft and the final one. Thus the narratives in the first eleven chapters of Genesis are not of the same type as those dealing with Abraham's history. One finds religious history attributing everything to God as the primary cause, religious-national history and so on.

MODES OF SPEECH

It is not enough to establish the literary form of a text, but one must also take into full consideration the modes of speech of the time of the writer, the ways of thinking and expressing himself, as the Constitution reminds us: *rite attendendum est . . . tum ad illos, qui hoc aevo in mutuo hominum commercio adhiberi solebant.*

In other words we should not approach a text with our own mentality and ways of speech, but get into the spirit and mind of the sacred authors, children of another age and culture.

HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Another factor which is of paramount importance in understanding a given text or literary composition is the circumstance of time and place: *Oportet porro in determinatis adiunctis hagiographus, pro sui temporis et suae culturae condicione . . . intenderit et expressit.* This is what is commonly known among scholarly circles the *sitz im leben*, the conditions under which a literary work was written: when, by whom, for whom, and for what purpose. To take one example: was a given Psalm say, written for private recital or for public use in the liturgy? Were the Patriarchal stories handed down from generation to generation for the purpose of maintaining national unity and moulding the souls of the younger generation and comforting the older one? All these points affect the understanding of these narratives and make us relegate to the past the one time unconvincing solutions of apparent difficulties and antinomies in the Biblical text.

THE BOOK OF GOD

The Bible is a divine book having God as its author, therefore in

addition to the human criteria applicable for the understanding of a human book one must add the ones required by the divine nature of this Book.

These criteria are listed in this passage: *Sed cum Sacra Scriptura eodem Spiritu, quo scripta est, etiam legenda et interpretanda sit, ad recte sacrorum textum sensum eruendum non minus diligenter respiciendum est at contentum et unitatem totius Scripturae ratione habita vivae totius Ecclesiae Traditionis et analogiae fidei.*

In this text three theological principles flowing from the unique origin of the Sacred Book, namely its being the book of God, are enlisted:

(a) the interpretation of a particular text must find its proper place in the over all development of Revelation and progressive evolution of Salvation history. The whole Biblical collection, being the work of the Holy Spirit, cannot contradict itself.

(b) the *analogia fidei*, that is, the principle according to which no datum of revelation can contradict another datum in the same Revelation. Hence no interpretation of a given text can contradict the content of another text. In such a case one of the two must be discarded and the text subjected to deeper studies.

(c) The third one is *conformity with the Tradition* of the Church. It is not our purpose to enter into the question of the relation of Sacred Scripture and Tradition, which is dealt by the Council in the second chapter of the Constitution. One thing we have to say here, that is, if Tradition and Holy Scripture have the same origin in the Holy Spirit, then there cannot be any contradiction between them.

By applying properly these three basic principles the exegete can understand, clarify, illustrate the Biblical texts and draw their theological content and present it to the people of God yearning for the bread of life.

THE MAGISTERIUM

This brings us to one final point, namely, the relation between the *Magisterium* and the *exegete*. We have seen already how Pope Pius XI refused to take any stand before the exegetes have done their homework. This basic principle in the intellectual life of the Church is re-emphasized in the Constitution under consideration in these words: *Exegetarum autem est secundum has regulas adlaborare ad Sacrae Scripturae sensum penitus intelligendum et exponendum, ut quasi praeparato studio, iudicium Ecclesiae maturetur. Cuncta enim haec, de ratione interpretandi Scripturam, Ecclesiae iudicio ultime subsunt, quae verbi*

Dei servandi et interpretandi divino fungitur mandato et ministerio.

This enunciation determines the place of the exegete in the study process of the word of God and its exposition to the people of God: he must prepare the ground for any possible intervention, and this happens only on special occasions, on the part of the *Magisterium*. During this period of gestation, so to say, the exegete, without giving up courage, vision and audacity in opening new ways of investigation and breaking new ground and proposing new, it may be, radical solutions, must use prudent judgement and discretion and be prepared to submit to the final judgement of the Church Teaching authority; on the other hand the faithful, most of them quite unfamiliar with the problems involved and unready to accept and assimilate the new advances must judge these pioneers in a spirit of charity and humility and trust.

CONCLUSION:

Thus we see that the constitution *Dei Verbum* with respect to Bible interpretation is the climax in the whole process of Catholic Biblical Scholarship in the last fifty years or so. We have followed the whole movement from its beginnings in the time of Leo XIII, through the modernism crisis, which put the Church on the defensive, but not out of positive action; solutions proposed were unacceptable for lack of maturity and study in depth, new evidence was being constantly brought forward for study. In the period between the two wars much work had been done the results of which one finds listed in the Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, which opened a new era in Catholic Biblical Scholarship. A period of enthusiastic and hectic activity followed not without its deviations, but on the whole the result as a whole was positive and now we find the fruit of all this labour enshrined in a Church Document of the utmost authority and importance. It is a highly encouraging document for the Biblical exegete and for all the faithful who want to return from cold scholastic formulae to the warmth of the Biblical language.

C. SANT

III CONGRESSO INTERNAZIONALE DEGLI SCRITTORI CRISTIANI*

Il 'Centro Internazionale di Studi e di Relazioni Culturali', con Sede a Roma - Corso Vittorio Emanuele, 75 - secondo l'Art. 2 dello Statuto, ha una finalità di grande interesse ed attualità. Infatti nel citato articolo si legge: 'Il Centro, desiderando affermare, con tutte le sue conseguenze, una concezione spiritualistica della persona umana e della società, intende stimolare e coordinare l'azione degli studiosi d'ispirazione cristiana di tutti i Paesi per promuovere sviluppi e approfondimenti di problemi assillanti l'inquiet coscienza dell'uomo del nostro tempo, per corrispondere all'esigenza di riparare all'eccessiva dispersione del sapere, che è causa di infecondità di ricerche e di unilateralità di indirizzi, e per diffondere o ridare agli uomini fiducia nella potenza della verità e dei valori morali e spirituali.

'Il vasto raggio d'interesse si estende perciò a tutte le scienze, da quelle fisiche e biologiche alle psicologiche, dalla letteratura alle arti e alla filosofia, dalla storia alla sociologia e alla politica, dalla pedagogia alle scienze morali e religiose'.

Nell'art. 3d poi si prescrive l'organizzazione ogni triennio di tenere un Congresso Internazionale di Scrittori di Ispirazione cristiana per lo studio di problemi o situazioni culturali che influiscono decisamente, in senso positivo o negativo, sulla vita degli uomini e dei popoli.

In accordo quindi con lo Statuto quest'anno il Centro ha deciso di svolgere a Venezia ed a Padova il III Congresso Internazionale degli Scrittori Cristiani sul tema generale: 'Coesistenza e Cultura nel mondo contemporaneo', per approfondire il significato della coesistenza e il valore della cultura nella vita umana sotto i vari aspetti che tale problema oggi presenta: storico, sociale, politico, psicologico, letterario, filosofico, religioso.

Il P. Benedetto D'Amore, O.P., Direttore Generale del Centro, in un manifesto mandato ai partecipanti al Congresso così spiega il tema importante prescelto per il Congresso:

'Il tema generale del Congresso *'Coesistenza e cultura nel mondo*

* Venezia, Ateneo Veneto, 27 Settembre - 1 Ottobre 1967.

contemporaneo', forse apparentemente generico a prima vista (escluso ovviamente il senso disgiuntivo, d'una ricerca cioè dei due termini 'coesistenza' e 'cultura' in senso diviso, separati tra loro), può essere subito interpretato o nel senso di una indagine sul problema della possibilità o meno di una coesistenza delle varie culture, o nel senso di una ricerca sul significato e importanza o valore della coesistenza umana della cultura del nostro tempo.

'La *prima* interpretazione ci porta al problema del pluralismo culturale, problema quanto mai vivo e attuale che alimenta, in una forma sempre più rigorosa e stringente e preoccupante la ricerca filosofica e teologica, e, in una forma più vaga e disincantata, la propaganda politica, come oggi si usa parlare, per es., di rivoluzione culturale in alcuni Paesi e di conquista culturale dai vari partiti politici.

'La *seconda* interpretazione ci porta ad un esame della coesistenza umana, della vita sociale, dell'esistenza comunitaria, dei rapporti dello uomo con gli altri suoi simili, dell'influsso benefico o malefico, positivo o negativo ch'egli ne riceve, come ciò appare nella vita quotidiana, nelle civiltà, nelle politiche, nelle ideologie, nelle scienze sociologiche e psicologiche, nelle letterature, nelle filosofie e nelle religioni del tempo in cui viviamo, aspetti questi che costituiscono il mondo della cultura.

'Su questa seconda interpretazione (che non intende in alcun modo escludere o diminuire il valore, l'impegno e la libertà della ricerca sulla prima, più ardua e più problematica) espongo brevemente alcune idee che potranno forse a qualcuno essere di orientamento nella scelta e determinazione di un particolare tema da trattare, per cercare così, assieme, di comprendere meglio la grandezza e i limiti dell'uomo e della coesistenza umana'.

Sarebbe troppo lungo citare *in extenso* quanto abbia scritto il Professore D'Amore, il quale mette in rilievo l'importanza del tema, assunto per questo Congresso, sotto i suoi vari aspetti e nei loro dettagli.

Il Comitato d'onore del Congresso è stato formato da S.Eminenza Rev. ma il Cardinale Giovanni Urbani, Patriarca di Venezia e Presidente della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, come Presidente; dall'On. Angelo Salizzoni, Sottosegretario della Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Presidente del Comitato Promotore; Professore Marino Gentile, Ordinario di Filosofia Teoretica all'Università di Padova, Direttore della Sezione del Centro di Padova-Venezia; dal Professore Benedetto D'Amo-

re O.P., Direttore Generale del Centro e da un Consiglio Direttivo Generale del Centro.

La Stampa, specie in Italia, si occupò largamente del Congresso degli Scrittori Cristiani, Citiamo a titolo di cronaca alcune notizie pubblicate nell'Osservatore Romano, del 30 Settembre 1967, dove Pino Ricci scrive: 'Il III Congresso Internazionale degli scrittori cristiani, promosso dal 'Centro di Studi e di ricerche culturali', sull'attualissimo tema 'Coesistenza e cultura nel mondo contemporaneo', è stato inaugurato con sobria cerimonia nell'ampio Salone dello Scrutinio del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia, alla presenza delle autorità politiche e religiose, di rappresentanze diplomatiche e di oltre 300 congressisti provenienti da 11 Paesi europei, con una relazione del Ministro della Pubblica Istruzione On. Luigi Gui, per altro assente, perchè trattenuto a Roma da improrogabili impegni relativi alla sua attività.

'Il saluto di Venezia è stato portato ai convegnisti dal sindaco ing. Giovanni Favaretto Fisca, la adesione del Governo italiano dal Sottosegretario alla Presidenza del Consiglio, On. Angelo Salizzoni, che è pure presidente del Comitato organizzatore del Congresso. Il Vescovo Ausiliare, Mons. Giuseppe Olivotti, ha letto un indirizzo di omaggio augurale al congresso dettato dal Patriarca di Venezia, Cardinale Giovanni Urbani, impossibilitato ad intervenire di persona a causa del suo ufficio di Presidente della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana.

'La coesistenza - prosegue l'indirizzo dell'alto Prelato - ha il suo fondamento nella natura sociale dell'uomo; tutto lo sviluppo della scienza, della tecnica, della letteratura, della filosofia, dell'arte dovrebbe tendere a realizzare la universale famiglia umana. Nella realtà non è così: l'egoismo e l'interesse hanno creato e conservano barriere tra uomo e uomo, popolo e popolo; di cui i contrasti, gli odi, le guerre, le catastrofi.

'La coltura, espressione di conquistata civiltà, è ordinata ad aiutare gli uomini, a superare nella verità e nella libertà i motivi di ogni contrasto, e nel compimento della giustizia nella carità, ad instaurare una coesistenza ragionevole e pacifica tra i popoli della terra'.

La relazione del Ministro Gui - letta all'assemblea dal prof. Pietro Pri- ni dell'Università di Roma - ha recato al congresso il contributo di una impostazione generale dei lavori, che si articoleranno in quattro giornate in cui verranno discusse le prospettive filosofiche, fenomenologico-psicologiche, letterarie, economico-politiche e religiose dell'importante

tema della coesistenza ...

'Dopo la relazione ufficiale di apertura del congresso, hanno portato ad esso il loro saluto ed augurio gli ambasciatori di Cuba, del Portogallo, della Turchia e dell'Irlanda'.

'Fra le adesioni più autorevoli al congresso sono state ricordate quelle del Cardinale Cicognani, del Presidente del Consiglio Moro, di Cardinali, Vescovi e personalità di tutto il mondo culturale cristiano. Il carattere di internazionalità del convegno è accentuato dalla presenza, come abbiamo detto, di rappresentanti di tutta Europa'.

L'*Osservatore Romano* ha inoltre pubblicato nei numeri di 1, 2-3 ottobre, ampie relazioni su i lavori del congresso, che trattò il suo tema in questo ordine: il giovedì, 28 settembre, l'aspetto filosofico e l'aspetto psicologico; il venerdì, 29 settembre, l'aspetto letterario, recandosi la sera a Padova, dove nell'Aula Magna dell'Università di Padova, il Prof. Carlo del Grande, Ordinario di Letteratura Greca dell'Università di Bologna, parlò sull'*Attualità della cultura classica*; il sabato, 30 settembre, l'aspetto religioso e l'aspetto politico: in serata si tenne un ricevimento ufficiale dei Congressisti nella Capella del Rosario della Chiesa SS. Giovanni e Paolo, ove l'on. Angelo Salizzoni, Sottosegretario di Stato alla Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, tenne una conferenza sul tema: *La Missione dell'Ordine domenicano*, in commemorazione del 750 anniversario della fondazione dello stesso Ordine. Finalmente la domenica, 1 ottobre, si parlò dell'aspetto religioso.

Fra gli oratori di questa ultima giornata figura il P. Serafino Zarb, Provinciale dei PP. Domenicani di Malta, e Professore Emerito della *Royal University of Malta*, il quale mandò al Congresso una comunicazione su un suo studio intorno al Calendario Perpetuo, che pubblichiamo qui sotto.

IL CALENDARIO PERPETUO

Il tema generale di questo III Congresso internazionale degli Scrittori Cristiani è la 'Coesistenza e Coltura nel Mondo Contemporaneo'; tema che viene svolto dai diversi illustri Oratori sotto le sue più svariate forme e nei suoi diversi aspetti. La coesistenza tra i diversi popoli non può prescindere dai due fattori, che vennero giustamente chiamati i due occhi della storia, cioè lo spazio ed il tempo, la geografia e la cronologia,

perchè ogni popolo ha il suo territorio e le attività di ogni popolo hanno la loro successione nel tempo. In questa mia comunicazione vorrei limitarmi solamente a questo secondo fattore, il tempo, e parlare di un calendario perpetuo che, a mio umile parere, è stato già in uso in una sezione degli antichi ebrei e venne ereditato da una sezione degli antichi cristiani; però il primo concilio ecumenico, quello di Nicea, nel 325, col fissare la Pasqua nella domenica che cade dopo il primo plenilunio che segue l'equinozio, fissato ai 21 marzo, lo fece cadere in disuso, quantunque le sue caratteristiche sono ancora visibili nella liturgia odierna della Chiesa.

L'importanza di un calendario perpetuo è stata sentita in ogni attività umana. La Pasqua, donde dipendono tutte le altre feste mobili dell'anno, che può cadere in qualsiasi domenica dopo il plenilunio di marzo, oscilla tra il 22 marzo ed il 25 aprile, come pure rispettivamente tutte le feste mobili che ne dipendono. Questa incertezza e mobilità della Pasqua è un grande inconveniente sia nell'anno forense, sia in quello scolastico ed universitario, come pure in quello del commercio, del turismo e dell'industria. È quindi necessario arrivare ad un calendario perpetuo per poter dare ai popoli la sicurezza e l'immobilità nel tempo, fissando solidamente l'occorrenza della Pasqua e delle altre feste.

Naturalmente il calendario è intimamente connesso colle feste religiose, tra le quali Pasqua è precisamente la principale. Non fa quindi meraviglia se la questione del calendario perpetuo sia stata anche l'oggetto di una decisione del Concilio Vaticano II, il quale nella sua prima Costituzione, *De Sacra Liturgia*, del 4 dicembre 1963, dice proprio così:

'Il Sacro Concilio Ecumenico II, tenendo nel debito conto il desiderio di molti di vedere la Festa di Pasqua assegnata ad una determinata domenica e di adottare un calendario fisso, dopo aver preso accuratamente in esame le conseguenze che possono derivare dalla introduzione di un nuovo calendario, dichiara quanto segue:

1. Il sacro Concilio non ha nulla in contrario a che la festa di Pasqua venga assegnata ad una determinata domenica nel calendario Gregoriano, purchè vi sia l'assenso di coloro che ne sono interessati, soprattutto i fratelli separati dalla comunione colla Sede Apostolica.

2. Parimenti il sacro Concilio dichiara di non opporsi alle iniziative che tendono ad introdurre nella società civile un calendario perpetuo

'Però, tra i vari sistemi allo studio per fissare un calendario perpetuo e introdurre nella società civile, la Chiesa non si oppone a quelli sol-

tanto che conservano e tutelano la settimana di sette giorni con la domenica, senza aggiunta di giorni fuori della settimana, in modo che la successione delle settimane resti sempre intatta, se non interverranno gravissime ragioni sulle quali dovrà pronunciarsi la Sede Apostolica'.

Incoraggiati e guidati da queste venerande parole del Concilio Vaticano II osiamo proporre un Calendario Perpetuo, basato, non sopra nuovi studi astronomici o calcoli matematici, ma sopra una tradizione giudeo-cristiana che, condannato dal Concilio di Nicea, forse perchè non corrisponde alle condizioni religiose cristiane, rievocate a quanto pare dal Concilio Vaticano II, lasciò chiaramente le sue tracce nella liturgia attuale della Chiesa: anzi crediamo che con alcune piccole correzioni si possa facilmente renderlo perfettamente conforme alle prescrizioni del Concilio Vaticano ed aver così un calendario perpetuo che era già in uso presso alcune comunità asiatiche cristiane. Crediamo che questo calendario perpetuo non sia altro che il calendario dei così detti Quattrodecimani di cui parlano diversi autori cristiani, fra i quali Santo Epifanio e Sant'Agostino. Cerchiamo prima di determinare le caratteristiche di questo calendario usato dai Quattrodecimani.

La prima caratteristica di questo calendario consisteva nel fatto che la commemorazione della morte di Gesù o la Pasqua *Crucifixionis* si faceva il 25 marzo, corrispondente al giorno quattordici di Nisan presso i Giudei. In questo giorno anche oggi si legge nel nostro Martirologio la morte del buon ladrone, Disma! Pasqua *Crucifixionis*, dalla quale dipendono tutte le altre feste mobili della Liturgia, era quindi fissa quanto al giorno del mese, non però quanto al giorno della settimana: poteva cioè cadere in qualsiasi giorno della settimana, precisamente come presso i giudei si celebra la festa di Pasqua. Ciò prova che questo calendario era più antico del Concilio di Nicea, celebrato nel 325, il quale fissò la Pasqua *Resurrectionis* nella prima domenica dopo l'equinozio vernale, fissato il 21 marzo, e quindi proscrisse il calendario dei Quattrodecimani. Nel calendario del Concilio di Nicea la Pasqua diventò una festa mobile e per conseguenza anche tutte le altre feste liturgiche che dipendono dalla Pasqua: in una parola il calendario fisso perdette la sua immobilità e non rimase più un calendario perpetuo.

Una seconda caratteristica del calendario dei Quattrodecimani era che l'anno era diviso in decadi, pur celebrando ogni settimana il giorno della domenica, come i giudei celebrano i loro sabati. Questa divisione dell'anno in decadi resta chiaramente provata dai nomi tutt'ora esistenti nella nostra liturgia come settuagesima, sessagesima, quinquagesima,

quadragesima, sia prima come dopo Pasqua: la quadragesima dopo Pasqua è l'Ascensione, la Quinquagesima è Pentecoste. Questo fatto acquista una prova di grande valore dal fatto che la Settuagesima, cioè il principio dell'anno, si celebrava, come si celebra tutt'ora dai Greci Ortodossi, nel principio dell'anno, il 14 gennaio, primo giorno dell'anno nel calendario giuliano. Contando dal 14 gennaio 70 giorni, si arriva al 25 marzo, Pasqua *Crucifixionis*. La Pasqua durava tre giorni (25-27 marzo), Pasqua *Resurrectionis*. Dopo cinquantina giorni cadeva la Pentecoste, che si celebrava anche durante i due giorni seguenti; finalmente seguivano i 24 decadi dopo la Pentecoste. L'anno dunque era diviso in $70 + 2 + 50 + 3 + 240$ che danno un totale di 365 giorni, cioè l'intero dell'anno solare. Ecco il calendario fisso dei Quattrodecimani! Tutte le feste erano fisse per riguardo al giorno del mese, ma restavano mobili per quanto riguardava il giorno della settimana, cioè potevano cadere in qualsiasi giorno della settimana, precisamente come nel calendario dei Giudei.

Il Concilio di Nicea, fissando la Pasqua nella prima domenica dopo il plenilunio che occorreva dopo l'equinozio vernale, rese la Pasqua e tutte le altre feste che ne dipendono fisse per riguardo al giorno della settimana, ma mobili quanto al giorno del mese, di modo che la Pasqua oggi oscilla tra il 22 marzo ed il 25 aprile, e così rispettivamente le altre feste.

La terza caratteristica del calendario dei Quattrodecimani che mostra anche la sua antichità, si è che questo calendario pur comprendendo tutti i giorni dell'anno liturgico, celebrava solo il Mistero della Redenzione. È un fatto conosciuto che il Mistero dell'Incarnazione venne introdotto in un'epoca posteriore. Quest'aggiunta nella liturgia ridusse le decadi in settimane, risparmiando così 156 giorni, e modellò la celebrazione del Mistero Dell'Incarnazione su quello della Redenzione, cioè un periodo di preparazione, l'Avvento, poi le Feste di Natale e della Epifania, e finalmente le domeniche dopo l'Epifania, le quali, secondo la data della Pasqua nell'anno corrente, si protraevano fino alla domenica della Settuagesima. È anche saputo che la celebrazione del Mistero dell'Incarnazione nella Liturgia è stata introdotta in occasione delle eresie cristologiche per imprimere vie maggiormente nella mente dei fedeli questo mistero fondamentale della religione cristiana.

Come si vede dalla nostra esposizione il calendario dei Quattrodecimani ha subito nel corso dei tempi varie mutazioni; ma però lasciò del-

le tracce molto cospicue anche nell'odierna liturgia della Chiesa. È quindi domandiamo: Lo si può ancora modificare e renderlo pienamente d'accordo con le prescrizioni della Costituzione *De Sacra Liturgia* del Concilio Vaticano II? La nostra risposta è del tutto affermativa e ci accingiamo a mostrare la facilità di questa adattamento. Prima però vorremo accennare brevemente ad alcuni sistemi che diversi eruditi hanno proposto recentemente per rendere il nostro calendario fisso.

Un sistema, che noi chiamiamo estremista, si sforza di rendere fisso non solo le grandi feste dell'anno, ma anche i minimi dettagli dei giorni nel corso dell'anno; come, per esempio, che ogni mese abbia quattro settimane, che il primo del mese fosse sempre la domenica e via via gli altri giorni ecc. Questo sistema non conserva niente del calendario al quale siamo abituati: sopprime le quattro stagioni, introduce un'altro mese nell'anno, e pur aggiungendo un decimoterzo mese arriva a 364 giorni, lasciando ogni anno un giorno bianco, anzi negli anni bissestili due giorni bianchi. Per questi ed altri inconvenienti, che sarebbe troppo lungo enumerare qui, crediamo che tali sistemi sono assolutamente inammissibili.

A nostro parere il sistema più semplice sarebbe quello di conservare l'anno divisibile in dodici mesi ed in quattro stagioni: fissando così tre mesi di una stagione e ripetendoli in ogni stagione, si ottiene facilmente un calendario fisso per tutto l'anno. Per arrivare a ciò bisogna assegnare ad ogni mese 30 giorni, ma l'ultimo mese di ogni stagione ne avrà giorni 31. La stagione comprenderà così giorni 91, cioè 13 settimane. Anche in questo sistema si avrà un giorno bianco, e negli anni bissestili due giorni, i quali si aggiungeranno dove si crederà più opportuno, nel mezzo od alla fine dell'anno, senza però introdurli nel computo dei giorni del calendario, perchè altrimenti turberebbero l'ordine stabilito.

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Fissati così gli elementi componenti il calendario, ci resta a fissare la forma completa ed assoluta per presentare un Calendario Perpetuo accettabile e ragionevole; che cioè tenesse conto delle abitudini tradizionali dei popoli, senza introdurre mutazioni troppo drastiche ed arbitrarie.

Abbiamo visto che il perno del calendario è la festa di Pasqua. Come si può fissare la festa di Pasqua? Vari sistemi hanno proposto vari giorni; nel Concilio Vaticano si parlò del giorno 8 aprile, altri preferiscono

il giorno 21 aprile, perchè altrimenti la Pasqua verrebbe troppo presto. Ciò vale per i popoli settentrionali, non per i meridionali: del resto questo argomento ha poco valore, perchè se per i settentrionali la Pasqua segna la primavera, in altre parti del mondo segna l'autunno! Quindi noi preferiamo attenerci alla tradizione, chechè ne sia del suo valore oggettivamente storico o meno.

Presso gli Ebrei il calendario era strettamente lunare; il principio di ogni mese era l'apparizione della nuova luna e si celebrava nel principio di ogni mese la *neomenia*. Pasqua cadeva il giorno quattordici del primo mese oppure nel primo plenilunio dell'anno.

Secondo un'antichissima tradizione cristiana l'anno in cui morì Gesù, il 14 nisan, o la Pasqua degli Ebrei, accadde il 25 marzo del calendario giuliano. Quindi secondo la tradizione cristiana la morte di Gesù avvenne il venerdì, 25 marzo, e la sua resurrezione la domenica, 27 marzo. Molti autori cristiani lo affermano ma nessuno meglio di Sant'Agostino lo esprime in una sentenza quasi lapidaria, quando scrive; 'Sicut a maioribus traditum suscipiens Ecclesiae custodit auctoritas, octavo enim kalendas aprilis conceptus creditur quo et passus' (*De Trinit.*, IV, 5). I Quattordecimani seguirono gli Ebrei nel celebrare la Pasqua il 14 Nisan, che nell'anno dello morte di Cristo cadde il 25 marzo, e seguitarono a celebrare la Pasqua Crucifixionis il 25 marzo, senza però attenersi al plenilunio dopo l'equinozio di marzo, perchè essi seguivano il calendario giuliano, che era solare, e non il calendario ebraico che era lunare. Fissato così il giorno di Pasqua riesce facile fissare tutte le altre feste mobili, arrivando così ad un calendario perpetuo, del tutto conforme alle prescrizioni del Concilio Vaticano II.

Prima di concludere vorremmo notare che fissando la Pasqua li 8 aprile od il 21 aprile, come è stato proposto da altri, nulla toglie a chè questo calendario non rimanesse fisso e non conservasse la maggior parte dell'odierno calendario quanto alla disposizione dell'elemento mobile del nostro calendario.

Ecco quindi il nostro sistema: La prima stagione, nella quale cade la festa di Pasqua, cioè il 27 aprile, è composta di tre mesi: gennaio, che incomincia il venerdì e finisce il sabato; febbraio, il quale incomincia la domenica e finisce il lunedì; e marzo che, comincia il martedì e finisce il giovedì; così la stagione seguente incomincia dinuovo il venerdì, primo aprile, e così di seguito.

In questo sistema si vede facilmente come la mutazione dell'odierno

calendario in un calendario perpetuo sia una cosa relativamente facile, fondata su dati tradizionali, senza indurre innovazioni strane e sconcertanti. Infatti, la maggior parte delle feste liturgiche restano del tutto immutate, mentre acquistano un giorno fisso nato nel mese, in cui cadono, come pure nella settimana. Ecco alcune precisazioni:

Le quattro domeniche d'Avvento avverranno il 29 novembre, il 6, 13 e 20 dicembre; mentre il Santo Natale cadrà il venerdì, come pure il primo giorno dell'anno. L'Epifania avverrà il mercoledì, 6 gennaio, e dopo la Epifania vi saranno solo due domeniche, il 10 ed il 17 gennaio.

La domenica di Settuagesima cadrà sempre il 24 gennaio, mercoledì delle Ceneri il 11 febbraio e la prima domenica di Quaresima il 15 febbraio. Il Venerdì Santo il 25 marzo e Pasqua il 27 marzo; l'Ascensione, il giovedì 5 maggio e la Pentecoste la domenica, 15 maggio. La prima domenica dopo la Pentecoste, Festa della SS. Trinità, il 22 maggio; la Festa del Corpus Christi, il giovedì, 25 maggio, e la Festa del S. Cuore, il venerdì, 4 giugno. Vi saranno sempre 26 domeniche dopo la Pentecoste, l'ultima delle quali cadrà sempre il 22 novembre.

Siccome nel nostro sistema viene pienamente conservata la divisione dell'anno solare in dodici mesi ed in quattro stagioni, le Quattro Tempore verranno pure osservate come in quegli anni, nei quali la Pasqua cade il 27 marzo, cioè quelle di primavera il 18, 20 e 21 febbraio; quelle d'estate il 18, 20 e 21 maggio, quelle d'autunno il 14, 16 e 17 settembre e finalmente quelle d'inverno il 14, 16 e 17 dicembre.

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Conchiudendo la nostra esposizione di un nuovo calendario perpetuo, fondato su quello sacerdotale degli ebrei, e su quella dei cristiani della Asia Minore, che dopo la sua condanna nel Concilio di Nicea nel 325, fu per qualche tempo conservato dai Quattrodecimani, ci sia acconsentito di rilevare tre importanti vantaggi che risultano nel calendario da noi proposto:

1. Il primo vantaggio consiste nel fatto che il nostro calendario perpetuo corrisponde perfettamente alle prescrizioni della Costituzione *De Sacra Liturgia* del Concilio Vaticano II. Infatti il nostro calendario 'conserva e tutela la settimana di sette giorni con la domenica, senza aggiunta di giorni fuori della settimana, in modo che la successione delle settimane resta sempre intatta, se non interverranno gravissime ragioni sulle quali dovrà pronunziarsi la Sede Apostolica'. È vero che nel

nostro, come pure in qualsiasi altro sistema, resti un giorno bianco, e negli anni bissestili due giorni bianchi; ma questo inconveniente è facilmente rimediabile, e potrà essere inserito o alla fine dell'anno oppure dopo il mese di giugno, come l'autorità competente crederà più opportuno.

2. Il secondo vantaggio si trova nel perfetto equilibrio delle quattro stagioni dell'anno, specialmente nel primo, il quale coincide perfettamente con il quarto. Il Natale ed il Venerdì Santo cadranno egualmente il 25 dell'ultimo mese della rispettiva stagione, evitando così che la mobilità della Pasqua allunghi troppo od accorci rispettivamente le stagioni di primavera e quella dell'estate: inconveniente grande di cui abbiamo fatto cenno al principio di questa nostra comunicazione. Nessuno si lamenterà più che l'ultimo trimestre scolastico ed universitario, tanto importante a causa degli esami, sia troppo breve a causa di una Pasqua tardiva: enorme vantaggio che giova non solo alle scuole ed alle università, ma anche alle altre attività umane sia commerciali come pure industriali.

3. Il terzo vantaggio è il carattere veramente fisso del calendario da noi proposto, senza costringere mutazioni drastiche ed oggezionabili; ma al contrario rispetta in massimo grado i dati tradizionali sia della nostra liturgia come pure della nostra civiltà.

Roma, 1 ottobre 1967.

SERAFINO M. ZARB, O.P.

MODERN ATHEISM

THE December 1965 issue of a Students' magazine in the United States carried the following obituary notice: 'Atlanta, Ga, Nov. 9: — God, creator of the universe, principal deity of the world's Jews, ultimate reality of Christians, and most eminent of all divinities, died late yesterday during major surgery undertaken to correct a massive diminishing influence'.¹ This is only one way of expressing a form of current theological atheism that has been gaining ground on both sides of the Atlantic since the end of World War II. 'Is God Dead?' This is the question that is being asked in a vast range of paperbacks and periodical literature today,² and which many people are constantly asking themselves, unless they have already reached the conclusion in their heart of hearts that the answer is 'yes'.

The purpose of this article is not to attempt to give an answer to this question, but rather to ask what such a question means, and why should it have been asked at all. For atheism today is not a philosophical system. It is a world-wide phenomenon. Gone is the time when philosophers and theologians went a long way to uncover the faults in the argumentation of systematic atheists, or to distinguish and subdistinguish between positive and negative atheists, and claiming that positive atheism is an impossibility. It is a fact that there is such a thing as atheism today, even if most atheists have never stopped to ask themselves why they are actually atheists.

Even within Christianity itself, now confidently and in many ways renewing itself in spirit as well as in form, a number of radical theologians are seriously arguing that the churches must accept the fact of God's death unless they want their Christianity to become entirely irrelevant to modern man. Christianity without religion, demythologizing, secular Christianity: these are some of the names and key notions that one comes across in a book like *Honest to God*,³ written not by Nietzsche or Sartre, but by the well known Anglican Bishop John A.T. Robinson, first published in Great Britain in 1963 and subsequently reprinted at least 12 times since as a paperback, or the considerably larger book

¹ 'Is God Dead?', *Time* magazine, April 8, 1966.

² E.g. 'Is God Dead?', *Reader's Digest*, February 1967.

³ John A.T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (SCM Press: London, 1963).

entitled *The Secular City*⁴ by Harvey Cox, of the Harvard School of Divinity. These and other exponents of the death-of-God theology, to signify that a transcendent personal God never really existed except in man's mind, declare that God is now absolutely dead, and yet they propose to carry on and advocate a Christianity without God, as better known theologians, like Bultmann, Tillich and Bonhoeffer,⁵ have done before them.

If nothing else, as somebody has well remarked, the Christian atheists are drawing the attention of Christians to the brutal reality that the basic premise of faith – the existence of a personal God, who created the world and sustains it with his love – is now subject to profound attack. Nor would this be hard to prove right. Princeton theologian Paul Ramsey observes that 'ours is the first attempt in recorded history to build a culture upon the premise that God is dead'.⁶ That this has been more than a mere attempt, or at any rate not exactly an exaggeration, can be readily seen by looking at the world's population today. About one third of the human race today live subject to, or at least greatly influenced by, a brand of totalitarianism that condemns religion as the opium of the masses, which condemnation has stirred some to heroic defence of their faith, but has also driven millions away from any sense of God's existence. And many more in Africa, Asia and S. America seem destined to follow suit, if nothing effective is done to stop the present wave of atheism in the world.

In the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, atheism is referred to as being among the most serious problems of our age. 'The word atheism', says the Council, 'is applied to phenomena which are quite distinct from one another'.⁷

Atheism then can mean a variety of things. Ignatius Lepp, in his book *Atheism in our time*, says that there are as many brands of atheism as there are atheists.⁸ As I have said at the outset, however, I have not proposed to give a definition of atheism. My objective is rather to try to find out what it is that the atheists reject, and why. We should, of course, add this other question: why is it a problem that the atheist does not believe in God? Evidently, the problem of atheism is not a problem in its own right, but only in the context of some notion of normalcy linked

⁴Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (SCM Press: London, 1965).

⁵D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (E. Bethge: London, 1953).

⁶Cf. *Time*, loc. cit.

⁷*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 19.

⁸Ignace Lepp, *Atheism in Our Time* (Macmillan: New York, 1963), p. 11.

to the believing attitude. Self-conscious atheism is a rather recent phenomenon in Western culture and in mankind in general. Up till recent times, the affirmation of God's existence, one may or another, has been normal, the denial of God the exception. Perhaps the situation will be reversed in the not too distant future, as is perhaps already the case in some countries and some social groups, where the theists rather than the atheists have to account for their position. But, in a historical perspective, theism rather than atheism is the point of departure, and atheism is the newcomer whose emergence and development need to be explained. In this perspective atheism appears as a conscious or unconscious rejection of some elements which were basic to the cultural traditions of the West, which were in fact cultural universals of mankind. According to the conscious atheists, of course, this history of atheism is a story of liberation, the story of how mankind, in its growth towards adulthood, liberated itself from the suffocating religious myths and escapism, notably from the myth of God.

In the light of the foregoing remarks it should be clear that the primary condition for a successful study of atheism is a sufficient knowledge of theism in its different forms and, more specifically, of the form of theism that is rejected, i.e. the theism as it appears to the atheist. A negation takes its meaning only from the idea it opposes. So there could be as many forms of atheism as there are ideas of God to be attacked or denied. 'The true God may be misunderstood and misconceived by a debased religion that falls to the level of superstition; the idea of God is then changed into an idol, and a religion that is self-contained, self-contended, self-preserving will defend its false God not only against the denial of the rebel, but also against the denial of the iconoclast who, inspired by a purer religion, shatters its clumsy images of the divine'.⁹

There are cases, such as that of Socrates, in which wickedness is added to misunderstanding in the charge of impiety or atheism. This methodology, however, while being the more correct one for an accurate study of the genesis of atheism, would take us far beyond the scope of this article, which is more of an introductory nature in the study of this phenomenon which is modern atheism.

As a world-wide phenomenon, then, modern atheism can be said to have been inaugurated with the 20th century, and more precisely in 1914 when the First World War broke out and with it crumbled the old political

⁹ E. Borne, *Modern Atheism* (Burns and Oates: London, 1961), p. 10

order clearing the way for a new age. This new age was ushered in the month of October of the year 1917, when a young revolutionary by the name of Karl Marx seized a decaying empire and injected a missionary zeal into it. After the Russian revolution, in less than 15 years, Eurasia was for most of its enormous extent conquered for Marxism and became the colossal crucible in which was produced a Communist civilization and an atheistic culture. About a third of mankind, roughly a thousand million souls at that time, endured the tremendous social pressure of a materialism holding all temporal and spiritual power. The state became identified with an atheistic machinery which strictly regulated the inspiration of men's minds and the direction of their consciences; and the ruling party, for which overt atheism was a first requirement, commanded the will of the masses. In the Communist system today no one can reach the dignity of active citizen without professing atheism, implicitly or explicitly, and that little worship which may be allowed from time to time for practical purposes, and the God who is forbidden to come out of Church, are treated as folk-survivals, vestiges of the past which manage to survive into the present, like a decrepit ship stranded on the beach which can never again set out on the deep.¹⁰

This powerful position occupied by atheism today raises some anxious questions. A force is powerful less because of what it has done than because of what it can still do. Communism is an all-embracing creed which, like Islam in earlier centuries, joins in a single battle in order to expand and keep expanding. Its leaders and its followers believe in the infallibility of the Book received from Marx and Lenin, and for its prophecies to be accomplished they believe it is necessary that all men shall one day be Communists. Another third of humanity, another thousand million men and more, are tempted to think of their hope for liberation from their oppressed condition in terms of Marxist ideology. In the liberal countries of the West, if Marxism has miscarried, even if it is sufficiently refuted by economic growth and human progress brought about without revolution, yet the freedom to question a society called capitalist is at once both its unique strength and its greatest weakness. It is lukewarm in its own assertiveness and hesitant in gambling on the future. Communism, insofar as it is so firmly and aggressively established in the world, seems to many to be a proof of at least the practical use-

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 84 f.; cf. also H. Gollwitzer, *Athéisme marxiste et foi chrétienne* (Tournai, 1965); R. Jolivet, *The God of Reason* (Burns and Oates: London, 1963), 118-124; I. Lepp, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-113.

lessness of religion and the temporal efficiency of atheism. And if Marxism goes on expanding, will not history become for many a practical but tremendous proof of the non-existence of God?¹¹

But Communism was not born by spontaneous generation. It opposed Christian civilization from within, at a time when this same civilization had already been stricken by an unseen malady, slow to evolve but latently developing. And as pathology has its own laws, and the stages of a disease follow one another with a recognizable connection between them, so also here we can notice a sort of law of three stages, the substance of which is to be found in most Christian philosophies of history.

The first stage is that of the middle ages, which we may call the 'theocentric' stage. That was a time when even secular life was closely related to God and to religion: human life had no meaning except in terms of God and of its relation to God. In his book entitled *The Death of God*, Gabriel Vahanian, of Syracuse University, suggests that 'Christianity, by imposing its faith on the art, politics and even economics of a culture in the medieval world, unconsciously made God part of that culture — and when the world changed, belief in this God was undermined'.¹²

Modern times are the second or 'anthropocentric' stage. In it man tended to reclaim his autonomy, as it were, and to make himself the centre of things. This is shown in the Renaissance, in the Reformation and in the French Revolution — the three great outbursts characteristic of this age. Man could do without having God at the centre of human life, and in fact man thought he could do without God at all. Man, as a rational animal, was capable of developing a culture without God and of building an ethical system that made as much sense as one based on revelation.

The third stage is our own contemporary era, which, in its turn, is characterized by both irritation with, and destruction of, the modern age. Anthropocentrism, at first respecting God in order to be able to manage man's affairs, shows its true colours and turns against both God and man. This is a time of anti-theism and atheism (against God and, what is worse, without God).

Thus we see that from the 14th to the 20th century the downward process was gradual, and that at every stage it was done in the name of man's freedom and emancipation from any authority and direction from

¹¹ Cf. E. Borne, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

¹² *Time*, *loc. cit.*

above: thanks to the Nominalists of the 14th century, who introduced fideism into theology and put out the eyes of faith reducing it to a blind certitude; and thanks to the Renaissance humanists who, while learning research into antiquity, invented out of nothing a pagan religion of nature and of the will to power; and thanks to the scientists of the 17th and 18th centuries, who wanted to reserve to man, whose hand was now well aided by machines, the mastery and the possession of a world in which no one recognized or wanted to recognize any trace of God. And these were followed by the philosophers of the enlightenment, whose deism was only a weapon to be used against any trace of supernatural realities. Then we have the French revolutionaries, experts in theorizing about the rights of man, yet deliberately forgetful of the rights of God, and the liberal economists, who under the pretext of not interfering with the free play of impartial laws, gave industrial society a lesson in materialism at its best. All of these heroes and each one of them have found heirs and disciples in our own age: they have helped to build the modern world and prepared the ground for the great triumphs of today's atheism. Whatever their apparent purpose, political or social, religious or humanistic, all the above mentioned revolutions of man's mind derive from the same source: acute anthropocentrism, the rebellion of man usurping the place of God, a rebellion which is best summed up by the word 'secularization'.¹³

So far we have made some philosophy of history; we have attempted to outline the historical background and we have pointed to the sociological causes of modern atheism. In order, however, to understand better the nature of today's atheism, it might be worthwhile to carry our study a little further and try to analyse the more proximate, or what we might call the psychological causes, of contemporary atheism. And these causes, I think, are of three kinds: intellectual, moral and religious.

It is first of all on the intellectual level that the certainty of God's existence is undermined in the minds of many people. The atheistic argument here runs chiefly on two different levels, objective and subjective, which basically correspond to the two levels in the structure of human consciousness. Objective atheism, if we may use this term, is that system which calls the existence of God into doubt on the grounds

¹³ Cf. H. Cox, *op. cit.*: H. de Lubac, *Le drame de l'athéisme athée* (Paris, 1950); E.L. Mascall, *The Secularization of Christianity* (London, 1965); I. Lepp, *op. cit.*, p. 114 ff.

that the proofs that have been provided so far are found lacking. One must not underestimate the interior conflicts of certain men who found that their scientific discoveries and rational convictions were at odds with religious tradition, and we know that many a scientific mind has spent much thought and energy in reconciling scientific insights with religious tradition. And the time had come when Western man thought he could shake off this tradition as standing in the way of what seemed to be the destiny of Western culture, namely the scientific and technological mastering of this world for the benefit of mankind, a task which was sometimes met with indifference by representatives of religion, if not outrightly opposed. Thus science was one of the most important agents in the secularizing process of mankind. And while many of the pioneers of modern science — like Newton and Descartes — were devout believers, they actually explained much of nature that previously seemed godly mysteries. When the French astronomer Laplace was asked by Napoleon why there was no mention of God in his new book about the stars, he coolly answered: 'I had no need of that hypothesis'.¹⁴ Neither for that matter, did Charles Darwin in uncovering the evidence of evolution.

Subjective atheism is the other kind of intellectual atheism. It rests on the rational analysis of man as a religious subject. The problem here is not whether or not God exists, but whether religion is at all possible. It is man himself who is questioning his own motivation to believe. According to some, God is really believed in only because man needs to believe in God (and the reason why man needs to believe in God may be different in different persons); hence it follows, according to these, that God does not really exist, but that He is only the projection of man. This kind of argument, with which we meet, for instance, in the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre and others,¹⁵ returns in an even more subtle way in another form. Modern man feels the need to be wholly in his activity, to be authentically himself. And his eyes are open to all the possibilities of self-deceit and hypocrisy on the one hand, and of escapism and day-dreaming on the other. The high degree of rational understanding of the structure of human culture has no doubt diminished the spontaneity with which man could recognize himself in cultural values. Hence atheism is an expression of a deep uncertainty of man in a world which he has himself created and made dangerous. Relatively

¹⁴ *Time*, *loc. cit.*

¹⁵ Cf. I. Lepp, *op. cit.*, pp. 141 ff.

well off materially, and reasonably certain as regards the primary needs of daily existence, modern man is uncertain with respect to the ultimate meaning of it all. He does not believe any more, because he is incapable of believing.

Another source of atheism for modern man consists of considerations which have to do with morality, with human dignity, with questions of right and wrong. But here again the rejection of God is related to the image of God which is rejected, and hence we can distinguish three kinds of moral atheism: the atheism that rejects the very idea of God, the rejection of faith in God as a proper human attitude, and finally the rejection of God as a protest against the moral attitude of the believers.

In the first category we would classify such forms of atheism, as the rebellion against the idea of a God who is love, because of the suffering and injustice in this world. In the second group fall such forms of atheism that consider it a sort of escape from the human condition to rely on God rather than on man's own power. The third form rejects God because one does not see any positive fruits of faith in the group of the believers, no higher moral standards, no more human dignity, no more love, but, on the contrary sometimes even injustice and oppression in the name of faith. It would take us too long to judge such attitudes and to see to what extent similar allegations may be true at times; but we may perhaps only make ours some remarks that are contained in a recent book entitled *The Meaning of Modern Atheism*, by Jean Lacroix,¹⁶ who is a Catholic. Here we have a study on the relation that is thought to exist between human responsibility and the denial of God. None of the various possible ways of avoiding responsibility is specifically Christian; nor indeed can it be claimed that Christianity encourages irresponsibility. What is it then that led some to think that being a believer tended to make one less aware of one's responsibilities as a man? What is it that makes one give up the struggle in this life and remain content to be no worse than the majority of men? Is it the admission of an after-life that is fully happy and unending? Is it a false notion of the providence of God, which they turn to suit their own laziness and greed? Is it a false notion of the will of God, which they have set into their minds to conceal their lack of hunger and thirst after justice? The answer to these questions is somehow given by Michael Novak in the introduction to his book *The Open Church*:¹⁷ 'For many centuries the Church has not

¹⁶ J. Lacroix, *The Meaning of Modern Atheism* (Gill & Son: Dublin, 1965).

¹⁷ M. Novak, *The Open Church* (London & New York, 1964); of the same author see also *Belief and Unbelief* (Darton, Longman & Todd: London, 1966).

appeared to be developing a Godlike race. It has appeared to not be forming men to integrity, to courage, to humble charity. It has seemed to many to call men to lead an unreal life, an irrelevant life'.¹⁸

The third source of atheism in our analysis is religious. What we mean here is perhaps not a real form of atheism, but a rejection of the traditional forms of theism. It is a form of negative theology pushed to its extreme. It is the assertion of the utter incomprehensibility of God, who is the Unknowable and has therefore to remain undefined. As an attitude, this form of atheism can run through a whole range of positions, from no concern with the Unknowable to a deep awareness of God's complete mysteriousness. The high God is, so to speak, too high to have any real interest in man's problems. There is the rather frequent attitude of people who say they believe there must be 'something behind it all', but have no real concern to come to any clear conception of him. To many who do formulate their notion of God, he could be anything from a celestial body well beyond the range of astronauts, to an invisible honorary president 'out there' in space. When a student of theology was asked to formulate his own notion of God, his answer was: 'God is all that I cannot understand'.¹⁹ Very often this sceptical form of atheism is a clear protest against the certainty with which certain churchmen, especially preachers, sometimes express themselves, just as if they had just finished having lunch with God, or against certain popular conceptions of God which appear to be rather childish and primitive, like that of God as an insensible judge who seems to have somewhat more fun in punishing than in rewarding men.

I think we must also include here, under the heading of religious atheism, that form of atheism which finds the pole of religious commitment not in God but in some other value, like for instance one's personal dedication to the benefit of mankind. In this form the phenomenon of atheism seems to be rather frequent and, indeed, rather typical of modern religiosity, even though its identification with religion is perhaps not so commonly accepted. I think we can admit that in such a mentality there is not certainly a full rejection of transcendence as such, even if there is a rejection of a transcendent God. For today the idea of the 'sacred' is being more and more defined in terms of a realization of mankind's highest potentialities, which may well imply transcendent spiritual values. And this can have a meaning even in an evangelical context,

¹⁸ Cf. also I. Lepp, *op. cit.*, p. 190 ff.

¹⁹ *Time*, *loc. cit.*



where the love of God and the love of man would be identified to such an extent, that the love of man becomes the final content of man's religious life.²⁰ Hence what we really end up with is this: an acceptance of the religious contribution of Christianity, accompanied by a rejection of its basis in revelation. This is what is meant today by secularized Christianity and religious atheism.

These are then the answers we might expect from one out of three persons we meet in a busy street of any large modern city, like Oxford Street, London, or Fifth Avenue, New York City, although for most atheists, as I have already suggested, these causes are only active in their subconscious and one would often find it hard to draw them out. 'Personally, I have never been confronted with the question of God', says a politely indifferent atheist, Dr. Claude Levi-Strauss, Professor of Social anthropology at the College de France. We may perhaps call this phenomenon, with Father John Courtney Murray, the atheism of distraction: 'People are just too busy to worry about God at all'.²¹

At this point of this study, where one might have logically expected to see, at least in outline, a refutation of atheistic thinking, I must come to a conclusion. My aim was to understand, not to disprove. For much too long, I think, we Christians have been content to dismiss opposing points of view as erroneous and futile, while making little attempt to understand why these opinions were held. Yet, if the Christian message of salvation is to be relevant, and seem relevant, to all men, then the Church, in the words of the Second Vatican Council, and of Pope Paul in his Encyclical 'Ecclesiam Suam', must look not with censure, but with understanding; she must not condemn those who are away from her, but establish a dialogue with them. And this Pope Paul has done, when in April of 1965 he announced to the world the setting up of a special Secretariat for non-believers, with the specific task of organizing inquiries in various countries, seeking contacts and drawing up norms and directives for the use of Catholics in the dialogue with atheists of all kinds. Hence it was not a complete surprise for us when a few months ago Pope Paul himself received in audience none other than

²⁰ Cf. John A.T. Robinson, *op. cit.*; in a subsequent booklet *The New Reformation?* (SCM: London, 1965) Dr. Robinson faces the question, 'Can a truly contemporary person not be an atheist?'; cf. also W. Hamilton, *The New Essence of Christianity* (New York, 1966); F. Jeanson, *La foi d'un incroyant* (Paris, 1963); P. Van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (New York, 1963).

²¹ *Time*, *loc. cit.*

the President of the Soviet Union.

Nietzsche spoke of the death of God, and the theme became a catchphrase. But it was not Nietzsche's invention, nor should it come as such a shock to Christians, whose faith is based on the death of a person who was God and on his victory over death. But what surprised the ancient world most was not that God was dead, but that, once and for all, he had risen from the dead. God is not dead: He is the most living of all living things. But many false gods must die before man can make his way to the living God.

MAURICE EMINYAN

THE EUCHARIST:

A SHORT COMMENTARY ON SOME NEW TRENDS

INTRODUCTION

THE importance of the Eucharist in both Catholic Theology and liturgical piety needs no new stressing. This importance, maybe, together with the special dignity which has always been ascribed to this most holy Sacrament, may easily inspire an amount of unwholesome timidity in the believer who hears about new controversies, new viewpoints, or new interpretations which lead to substitute new words for the time-hallowed term: transubstantiation.

To allay similar suspicions I intended to publish a translation of Fr. E. Schillebeeckx's article: 'Transubstantiation, Transignification and Transfinalisation'. Unfortunately Fr. Schillebeeckx could not allow the publication of the translation of his article because that article no longer represents his views on transubstantiation or on the Eucharist in general. However, one feels that our local clergy, who read with pleasure *Melita Theologica* and *Pastor*, should be given some sort of introduction to this difficult subject in, at least, one of the Reviews which they consider their own.

CONTROVERSIES HAVE ALWAYS EXISTED AND WILL ALWAYS BE

It is important to note that controversies, even about the most important points of our belief, have always existed in the Church. There were various opinions on the Eucharist before Trent. And although the definitions of that Council have limited the scope of these controversies, still, many points relating to the Eucharistic dogmas have been left open.

One may recall such debated items as the 'activity' of the accidents after transubstantiation has taken place. Should this activity be explained by recurring to an atomistic or to a dynamistic theory? Again one may refer to the distinction between the annihilation theory and the conversion theory when speaking about the outgoing substance of the bread and the wine.

These diametrically opposed opinions may, perhaps, be considered

unimportant by the lay believer. To the theologian, however, they clearly show that even a General Council, does not solve completely the problems arising on the periphery of a central perception of a revealed doctrine. One should not forget, either, that it is sometimes difficult to determine with precision what really belongs to the core and what to the periphery of a Divine Truth.

As far as the Eucharist is concerned we may summarise the principal dogmas in the following two theses:

1. That in the Eucharist the Lord Jesus is wholly and really present under the species of bread and wine;
2. That this happens because the substance of the bread and the substance of the wine are terminated and the substance of the Body and Blood of Our Lord takes their place. This change is aptly called transubstantiation.

THE FIRST THESIS

The first 'thesis' or article of faith is not discussed by the new theologians except in a very limited way.

Modern catholic theologians sincerely believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. They also stress the reality of this presence and reject a merely symbolic presence. Still they have some pertinent observations to make:

1. Christ's presence in the Eucharist is real. But it is not the only real presence. Jesus is *really* present amongst us in different ways. He is really present in the midst of the liturgical community; He is present in his Word; He is present in the soul of those who love Him. All these may be called real presence, but the Eucharistic presence is not only real: it is also an excellent or special one.

As Pope Paul has said: '(It) is called the real presence not in an exclusive sense, as though the other forms of presence were not 'real', but by reason of its excellence'. (*Mysterium Fidei*). In other words, although Christ's presence in the other 'events' is real, his presence in the Eucharist is not only real, but also on a different level.

2. Although Christ's presence in the Eucharist under the species is not only real but also has a special dimension, yet this sacramental presence is not an aim in itself. Jesus is not present under the species mainly to be adored or admired. He is there principally to be received – eaten. The Eucharist is not an aim in itself but a means to an end. The end is our growth in charity and the community's growth in unity.

This truth has found an echo in the recent instructions about the Eucharist issued by the Holy See. One notes that the accent is being placed where it really belongs, namely on the Mass and on Holy Communion rather than on the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. This does not mean that the reservation and adoration of the Holy Species should be discouraged. What is discouraged is the excessive stressing of the real presence as a 'static' presence to the detriment of the 'dynamic' presence during the celebration of the Sacrifice and Holy Communion. Also the stressing of the individualistic aspect to the detriment of the communal aspect.

3. The real presence should never be considered in an almost materialistic or mechanistic manner. For example there is no theological basis for the belief that certain corporals have been stained by the Blood of Our Lord. If a miraculous element is admitted in certain cases, the miracle must be explained as a simple *appearance*: never as the real shedding of blood. The real presence should not be identified with a materialistic presence. That is the reason why it has often been called in ancient times a 'spiritual presence' and even a 'mystic presence' and Christ's Body in this Sacrament used to be called the 'Mystical Body' by some Fathers (*Pere De Lubac*).

One should never forget that Christ's Body, now, is a glorious resurrected Body, or as Saint Paul would have put it 'a spiritual Body'. We must therefore avoid the attraction of an exaggerated realism.

Traces of an exaggerated realism are found not only in almost all the sermons preached on the Holy Eucharist, but also in the writings of many theologians. It is to avoid this exaggeration that the new theologians have tried to rethink the whole doctrine behind the word transubstantiation.

THE SECOND THESIS OF TRENT

The second thesis or article of Faith quoted above dealt with the alteration which takes place in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. It is not enough for the true believer to hold that Christ is really present in the Eucharist. He must also admit that this real presence brings about a change in the bread and in the wine. The heart of the modern controversy on the Eucharist lies here, in the difficult question: What kind of change is it that takes place?

Until recently, all catholic theologians admitted that bread (like all created things) was made up of a substance (which does not fall within

the range of our sense perception) and of accidents (which we perceive through the senses). They also had to admit that substance and accidents are really distinct from each other. The change which takes place at the consecration was described as a complete and total change of substance (one substance receding and another taking its place) with the accidents remaining. We repeat that there are within orthodox catholic theology different explanations of the permanence of the accidents.

The change of substance was admitted by one and all. Some years ago, however, the first 'modern' controversy arose between Fr Selvaggi and Fr (now Bishop) Carlo Colombo. *This* controversy may be described in the following terms: granted that at the consecration the substance of the bread and the wine are completely changed, shall we call this change a 'physical' or a 'metaphysical' change.

Fr Selvaggi opted for a physical change, Fr Colombo stood for a metaphysical one. Although this was the first explicit discussion of the problem, I think that St Thomas in the *Summa Theologiae* envisaged the whole controversy and solved it in a negative way – denying, that is, the existence of a physical change. In fact he says: This alteration '*non est formalis nec continetur inter species motus naturalis*' (for *motus* read *change*, for *naturalis* read *physical* since *natura* = *phusis*. S.Th. III, 3.75.4 in corp).

Consequently there takes place an 'ontological' change, or a 'substantial' change, while physically and chemically nothing is changed. In other words, the change which takes place is 'so deep' that not only it cannot be reached by scientific investigation, but also it is beyond the scientific domain, taking place at a different level – the ontological plane.

The polemic which took place between Selvaggi and Colombo remained undiscovered by the ordinary catholic. It was limited to a few theological reviews and never reached the general public. Moreover although the dispute was very modern, it remained within the precincts of the traditional theological framework. It took as its starting point the '*mutatio substantialis*' and the distinction between the substance and the accidents. It was on the same level, if we may use an analogy, as the controversy between the promoters of '*annihilatio*' and '*reductio*'.

TRANSIGNIFICATION AND TRANSFINALIZATION

More recently, certain catholic theologians, especially Dutch theologians, have gone a step further. They started to doubt the inevitability

of the distinction between substance and accidents. Indeed they have questioned the very meaning of substance. Do material objects, like bread, really contain a substance? Are we in duty bound to hold on to the notion of substance, a notion which has come down to us from Aristotle, a pagan philosopher? Is it really binding to hold that substance and accidents are really distinct?

It is true that Trent made use of this terminology, but already, in the nineteenth century, Palmieri noted that the Fathers at Trent, did not intend to define the philosophy of Aristotle, even though their mental categories were aristotelian. This same observation has been recently made by Schillibeeckx and Rahner. It seems that the only truth the Fathers of Trent intended to define was the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and, as a consequence, an essential change in the Bread and Wine.

It is true that the Council of Trent defines in a most clear manner that all christians must believe that at the Consecration there is a change in the substance, even though the accidents remain intact. But perhaps these words should not be taken too literally, or rather, too philosophically. We should try to find the fundamental idea behind those words. The fundamental idea is this: a change takes place in the Bread and Wine.

But if this change is not explained as a change of substance (in the thomistic or aristotelian sense) in what does it consist?

The new theologians reply: the aim for which bread is ordinarily and naturally made is changed. The bread no longer exists as a bodily nourishment only, but begins to exist for the nourishment of the soul with the Body and Blood of the Lord. It takes on a new 'finis'. Hence we have a *transfinalizatio*.

We can also say that the bread changes its profound meaning. It no longer means what it meant before. It signifies something new, a new Presence: the real presence of the Lord.

SOME ANALOGIES

Exempla claudicant. And it is the examples or analogies brought forward by the new theologians which have given some scope to the misinterpretations of their view on transfinalization and transignification. Yet an analogy, if interpreted correctly, can help bring about the true meaning of a theological stance.

One such analogy is the 'gift' analogy. Let us examine it briefly.

When I look at a bar of chocolate which I have bought in a confectionary, I perceive an object delicious to my palate. But when I look on a bar of chocolate presented to me by a loved and loving person I perceive, not merely an edible object, but a 'gift', a 'sign' of friendship or love. This is only an analogy, and the trouble is that some have run away with it and proclaimed that the Dutch have reduced Christ's presence in the Eucharist to a 'symbol'. The analogy was only intended to bring out the idea of a new meaning inherent in the gift chocolate; its new aim.

In the case of the Eucharist the gift of the Bread and the Wine take on a new meaning and a new aim both of which are much more real, because the new element behind the gift is not an act of love but a Divine Love made man for us. It is Christ himself who is behind the gift.

BREAD, WINE, WATER

I would rather draw my analogy from what happens in the other sacraments, especially from what takes place in the sacrament of Baptism.

Every sacrament is a *sign* that signifies and causes grace. From this it follows that every sacrament must *contain* grace, and, therefore, that the sacramental elements receive a new (supernatural) entity. One can therefore say that when a sacrament is taking place the form-matter dyad really changes. Thus, while Baptism is being administered, water takes on a new 'energy'. It is no longer 'common water' although physically and chemically it is not affected at all. There is no apparent change, yet a real change takes place in the ultimate *meaning* and *aim* of the water. 'Gratia non tollit *naturam*'. The physical nature or reality of the water is not destroyed or taken away. But a new supernatural dimension (a fourth dimension, almost) is added.

I cannot see why the real presence cannot be explained along the same lines; provided, of course that certain essential reservations are made, namely:

1. In the case of Baptism the supernatural 'virtue' of 'fourth dimension' is transitory; in the Eucharist it is permanent.
2. In the case of Baptism the new dimension is a 'thing' – grace; in the Eucharist the new dimension is a Personal Presence, a human-divine presence: the presence of Christ.

But if above we called grace a thing, we did so only with reservation, hence the inverted commas. For is not grace itself a presence? But we must distinguish somehow between one presence and another.

IS THIS VIEW AN ORTHODOX ONE?

One may object: this is an unorthodox view. The Church, in fact, has never spoken of a transubstantiation of water but only of bread and wine.

This is certainly true as far as solemn definitions of Doctrine go. But if we take a look at the Liturgy we find an expression which comes near to the idea of transubstantiation. At the Blessing of the Baptismal Font the celebrant invokes the coming of the Holy Ghost so that with his power 'totam *substantiam* (aquae) regenerandi *fecundet* effectu'.

But, what is more important, we should never forget that solemn definitions are always conditioned by the position held by some adversary. Now the same heresies which were spread about the Eucharist did not arise, and could not arise in the case of the other sacraments.

Again, the fact that what we have called 'a new dimension' exists as a permanent element in the Eucharist and as a transitory element in Baptism, must have led to different manners of expressing the coming into being of those two 'dimensions'.

But the greatest difficulty against the above explanations is raised by the words of Trent. In fact, the Council was very imperative in excluding a 'bread substance' alongside the substance of the Body of the Lord. 'Si quis dixerit, in sacrosancto Eucharistiae sacramento remanere substantiam panis et vini una cum corpore et sanguine Domini nostri Jesu Christi, negaveritque mirabilem illam et singularem conversionem totius substantiae panis in corpus et totius substantiae vini in sanguinem, manentibus dumtaxat speciebus pani et vini, quam quidem conversionem catholica Ecclesia aptissime transubstantiationem appellat: anathema sit. (Denz. ed 33, 1652).

These words seem to mean that the bread (and wine) not only receive a new supernatural entity, but also that some natural element (the substance) melts away. But is this the only logical interpretation? Believing, as we do, that the words of the above quoted canon are infallible, we can still hold that they are human words and, as such, must be explained according to the rules of hermeneutics. One of these rules must answer the question: what should we mean, in the above context, by *substantia*? As we have already said there is no absolute need to take *substantia* in an arsitotelian or thomistic sense. I would suggest as an equivalent term in the context the latin words *dispositio intima* as distinguished from *dispositio externa* which are the *species*.

The sense of the second canon of Trent would be: After the consecration the external disposition of the bread remains the same; but the

internal disposition is changed since a new element is added – the real presence of Christ. What the Council really wants to stress is not the miraculous element but the importance of the New Presence which absorbs the purely natural importance of the bread and wine in a higher existence. The aim of the definition, then, is to show that when we look, eat or adore the Eucharistic Bread, we must set aside everything that is natural, visible, and sensible, and concentrate on the invisible profound reality: the presence of Jesus.

Thinking, as they did, within the framework of a scholastic philosophy, the Fathers of Trent found no better way to express the diminished importance of the species than by saying that their substance had been taken away from them.

They also intended to avoid a certain dichotomy under the species. To assert that there are two substances (the bread and the Body of the Lord) under the same species would be to put the Body of the Lord on the same footing as the bread. This too had to be avoided, and they found no other way of doing this than by saying that one substance has to make room for the other. Hence transubstantiation.

But, in our case, we may easily avoid this fallacy by looking at the whole process from a different perspective. We have on the one hand the natural, visible external element; on the other hand the new, invisible and supernatural element. The second element does not exist alongside the first in the sense that it is on the same plane. They exist together in a special sense, that is because the second is signified and caused by the first. We have therefore, a case of sacramental causality – even if a very special and ineffable case.

CONCLUSION

I would like to summarise the last part of this article by using excerpts from the *Summa Theologiae* of St Thomas. These excerpts have been culled from different articles and should be thought of as a mosaic rather than as an organic thomistic view. Their authority therefore is necessarily limited. They do not give the complete 'mens Sancti Thomae', but they show that my interpretation is not against the style of the *Summa*. Need I repeat that they are taken faithfully and word for word from the *Summa*?

Sacramentum ponitur in genere signi. Quando investitur canonicus per librum, liber est quoddam signum quo designatur traditio canonicatus. Sed iste modus (significandi) non transcendit rationem signi. Sac-

ramenta novae legis *simul* sunt causae et signa.

Sacramentum ergo continet gratiam, uno modo sicut in signo, alio modo sicut in causa.

Necesse est ergo ponere quod in sacramento sit aliqua virtus. In aqua (baptismi) est quaedam sanctificationis virtus, non permanens sed fluens. Augustinus dicit: Quae tanta vis aquae ut corpus tangat et cor abluat. E contra sacramenta veteris legis non habebant in se aliquam virtutem sed solum significabant.

Sicut autem se habet virtus Spiritus Sancti ad aquam baptismi, ita se habet Corpus Christi verum ad species panis et vini.

Haec est differentia: Eucharistia continet aliquid sacrum absolute scilicet ipsum Christum, aqua vero baptismi continet aliquid in ordine ad aliud scilicet virtutem. In aliis sacramentis continetur quaedam virtus participata a Christo. In Eucharistia continetur ipse Christus substantialiter (hos est) non per participationem.

Christus fit praesens in Eucharistia non sicut in loco sed sicut in sacramento.

L. CACHIA.

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'AGAPÈ' IN I CORINTHIANS XIII (III)

WE HAVE come now to the third and last part of this study, where we intend to explain the interpretation of Father Lyonnet and close with a personal critical note about the Pauline text.

Apart from an article written in the French review 'Catéchistes', a short review of Spicq's *Agapè in Biblica*, and a few dispersed remarks in the exegetical notes given during his lectures, there is nothing more written by Fr. Lyonnet on the subject. In fact, I have often wondered if I had really managed to have a clear and right grasp of his views and arguments from this scanty literature; and to do him justice in what I say I decided to see him personally and show him a rough copy of my brief exposition of his opinion and square out some points which were not clear in my mind. And that I did.

In all the Pauline Epistles the precept of love, and, in particular, love of neighbour, plays a prominent role. At times we find that love could be said to be the subject itself of the Epistle.

Nessuno studio ci renderà più coscienti dell'importanza eccezionale che ha questo precetto nel pensiero dell'Apostolo e, sotto la forma più commune, quello dell'amore del prossimo.¹

In the study of St. Paul we find out that the real motive for being invited to practise virtues is always love, and love of neighbour.

Perchè siamo invitati ad esercitare l'umiltà? Perchè non sapremo amare efficacemente i nostri fratelli, cioè 'servirli', senza stimare in tutta umiltà che gli altri ci sono superiori' (Filip. 2, 3 che precede la solenne esortazione all'amore disinteressato, all'esempio di Cristo, vv. 5-10).

We work so that we have something to give to those in need of it (Eph., 4, 28) and not be a burden to others and a bad example to those '*qui foris sunt*' (Thess., 4, 12).

We pray that others may receive graces from God and increase in perfection and in God's love:

'Salutat vos Epaphras, qui ex vobis est, servus Christi Jesu, semper sollicitus pro vobis in orationibus, ut stetis perfecti, et pleni in omni voluntate Dei.' (Col., 4, 12)

¹The quotations are from the Italian translation published by the '*Rinascita Cristiana*'.

After all, the whole moral teaching of Paul may be summed up in one precept, the precept of love, as we find it very explicitly stated in the Epistle to the Galatians:

'Omnis enim lex in uno sermone impletur: Diliges proximum tuum sicut te ipsum.' (5, 13)

And Paul has repeated it to the Romans:

'Nemini quidquam debeatis: nisi ut invicem diligatis: qui enim diligit proximum, legem implevit', for the whole decalogue and 'quod est aliud mandatum, in hoc verbo instauratur:

Diliges proximum tuum sicut teipsum ... Plenitudo ergo legis est dilectio.'

One would wonder how it is that Paul recalls simply the second commandment: the precept of love to the neighbour; and Lyonnet replies: No wonder at all! for this has been the teaching of the Lord whom Paul wanted to follow closely in everything:

'Ma Gesù agiva forse diversamente quando dichiarava:

"Tutto ciò che volete che gli uomini vi facciano, fatelo ugualmente a loro: ecco la legge ed i profeti!" (Mt. 7, 12)

Besides, says Lyonnet, Christ himself told us that the characteristic note of his disciples will be fraternal love (Jo., 13, 35) and, what is really important and striking, Jesus's authentic teaching tells us that we shall be judged according to our attitude and behaviour towards our neighbour.

Of course, Our Lord did not intend to abolish, in any way, that which He has taught through the first commandment (cfr. Mc., 12, 28-34; Mt., 22, 34-40; Lc., 10, 25-37) But even here one should note that when the scribe asked him about the first and the greatest commandment Jesus Christ was not contented merely to reply with the first words of the profession of faith which was recited by the Jews every morning and evening; he added that for which he was not asked, and to the 'first' he added a 'second' 'similar to the first': 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. From the study of the synoptics one could also notice a development in the teaching, and St. Luke made note of this. In fact, both in Matthew and in Mark we read that the doctor of the law put questions to our Lord about the first and great commandment and our Lord replied to him, unifying the 'first' and 'second' commandment. In Luke the question is put by the scribe and the answer is given by the scribe too who did not speak of two commandments, that is, of 'first' and 'second' but one unified precept. (Lc., 10, 25-28)

Consequently, concludes Lyonnet, it seems that by the time Luke wrote the Gospel, there has already been a development in the doctrine and the Evangelist ordered Christ's teaching as it was already known by the people who listened to his divine words.

In reality, the two commandments are included in one another: who loves God as he should love him will certainly love his neighbour, for he loves all that God loves; and vice-versa, he who does not love the neighbour 'whom he sees' will never know to love God 'whom he does not see'. This is the teaching of St. John (I Jo., 4, 20). Hence, love of neighbour is the normal and necessary expression of our love for God, and then Fr. Lyonnet proceeds to say – and this is very important for the questions at issue – :

'ed è per questo che San Paolo riserva la parola 'agapè' per indicare (oltre l'amore di Dio a di Cristo per noi) l'amore che testimoniamo ai nostri fratelli: per convincersene basta consultare confrontandoli i brani che comprendono la parola agapè, oppure esaminare la descrizione, così completa, che egli dà dell'agapè nel I Cor., 13, vv. 4-7, dove egli propriamente intende parlare della virtù 'teologale' della carità, messa vicino alla fede e alla speranza o meglio al di sopra di queste.'

In the analysis of the Pauline texts Lyonnet says that agapè refers always to love towards our neighbour. One of the main argument of Lyonnet is the fact that in St. Paul '*pistis*' and '*agape*' are always found together and always in the order which is given them in I Cor., 13, 13: first '*pistis*' and then '*agape*'. According to Fr. Lyonnet '*pistis*' refers to our love for God, whilst '*agapè*' expresses our love for our neighbour. To love God, in the Old Testament, meant nothing else but to be obedient to God, to render service to Him, to choose Him out of all the pagan gods and acknowledge Him as your true God, in other words, to believe that He was the right God and to brush away all the pagan gods as false ones. Hence, to love God and to believe in Him were exchangeable concepts.

Besides, Lyonnet remarks that Paul, following closely the teaching of the Lord, wants to lay special stress on fraternal charity, for this was the precept, once given to the Jews in Leviticus, which was practically forlorn and gone into abeyance. It has always been known among the Jews, but far from practised! Jesus did not intend, as many exegetes maintain, simply to universalize the precept of fraternal love and to teach that we have to love everyone, even our enemies. First and foremost, he wanted to put this precept into a new light, to lay a special

stress, on it, to bring it one with the 'first' precept of love and so to fuse the love of God and the love of neighbour together. And this too intended Paul in his teaching. But let us not forget, points out Lyonnet, that the agapè, the fraternal charity, is not merely a moral ruling; it is above all a theological virtue, and the explanation he gives is contained mainly in the following lines:

L'amore del prossimo è teologale nel senso che unisce l'uomo direttamente a Dio stesso' (St. Th., in I Cor., 13, 13): superiore alla fede ed alla speranza esso unisce l'uomo direttamente a ciò che in Dio, se si può dire, è più Dio, poichè secondo la Rivelazione "Dio è amore" (I Jo., 4, 8). Così il nostro amore per i fratelli sarà essenzialmente il riflesso dell'amore stesso con cui Dio ci ama, amore di cui il Cristo è l'espressione perfetta.'

Fraternal love is a theological virtue for our love towards the neighbour is a participation of God's love towards mankind. We love others by the same love by which God loves us and them! Consequently our love, as a reflection of God's or Christ's love for us, should necessarily produce in us the same characteristics of the divine love for us: a love that is merciful, compassionate, loyal, '*patiens*', '*benigna*' ... and above all disinterested.

Il cristiano avrà, sì, preferenze per gli umili (Rom., 12, 16), coloro dai quali non ci si aspetterà nulla in ricambio (Lc., 14, 13-14). E gli si comanda specialmente di amare i suoi nemici (Rom., 12, 14; Mt., 5, 43-47; Lc., 6, 27-35) perchè non esiste amore più gratuito e disinteressato, più simile a quello stesso di Dio e di Cristo, che ci ha amato: "Quando eravamo ancora peccatori" (Rom., 5, 6-8; 15, 1-3; Mt., 5, 48; Lc., 6, 35-36)'.
 'L'amore del cristiano si modellerà dunque sull'amore di Dio e quello di Cristo che ne è la perfetta espressione: "Mostratevi imitatori di Dio, come figli teneramente amati. Vivete nella carità secondo l'esempio di Cristo."

Lyonnet's second argument to prove that fraternal charity is a theological virtue centres in St. Paul's doctrine about the Mystical Body:

'Ma bisogna anche chiamarlo teologale nel senso che per San Paolo colui che ama il prossimo ama Cristo, poichè tutti gli uomini uniti a Cristo (e tutti sono chiamati ad esserlo) formano con Cristo risuscitato un unico essere vivente (Gal., 3, 28: "un solo" al maschile); essi sono 'le membra del Cristo' e costituiscono il suo corpo (I Cor., 6, 15; 12, 12 & 27; Ef. 1, 23 ecc.) Questa dottrina che è al centro della teologia di San Paolo, semplice eco, del resto, dell'insegna-

mento del Maestro e del suo 'mihi fecisti' (Matt. 25, 40) consacra la dignità suprema della persona umana, che sempre la morale cristiana si sforzerà di promuovere: L'uomo è figlio di Dio perchè è "un altro Cristo."

This typically Pauline doctrine of the Mystical Body, which has always been a favourite subject for the Fathers, especially in their sermons, explains how we can love God really and effectively, how our love is not simply an act of admiration, but a concrete, active, personal, and immediate act of love towards God. It is a love of real friendship, a love which is expressed in an exchange of 'give' and 'take':

'... un amore per cui un amico vuole il bene del suo amico, e fa del tutto per procurarglielo; non solamente egli riceve, ma dà. Tra Dio e l'uomo un tale scambio di beni, necessario pertanto nella vera amicizia², pare decisamente escluso. Si direbbe che da Dio l'uomo non possa che ricevere e debba, di conseguenza, essere privato della beatitudine che, secondo la parola di Cristo riportata da San Paolo, consiste nel dare più che nel ricevere (Atti 20, 35). Il mistero dell'incarnazione opera proprio questo prodigio: senza perdere nulla della sua trascendenza Dio, infinito, si fa uomo, finito, e dunque capace di "ricevere" qualche cosa dalle sue creature. Per quanto strana e sacrilega la cosa possa sembrare, Dio ha voluto aver bisogno dell'uomo ...

Con l'incarnazione noi comprendiamo fino a quel punto Dio ha voluto condividere il nostro destino, e farsi uno di noi. Poichè durante la sua vita mortale Gesù Cristo non è soltanto passato facendo del bene; essendo un uomo autentico ha voluto bisogno degli altri; Egli ha dato, ma ha ugualmente ricevuto, e quando seduto sul pozzo di Giacobbe implorava un poco d'acqua per smorzare la sete, non era certo un gioco che faceva con la donna Samaritana. Ora l'incarnazione continua. Cristo ha voluto rimanere presente in mezzo agli uomini nell'Eucarestia e nei membri del suo corpo: due presenze di cui S. Paolo nota espressamente il nesso: un solo pane (eucaristico), un solo corpo (di Cristo) (I Cor. 10. 16-17).' (p. 9)

Lyonnet's position may, perhaps, be briefly given in the following points:

- (i) Love, in particular, love of neighbour, is the centre of the great pauline epistles.

²Lyonnet conceives love in the same way as it is concretely explained and expressed in the '*Contemplatio ad Amorem*' of St. Ignatius.

- (ii) All the moral teaching of Paul is summed up in one precept: love of neighbour (Gal. 5, 13; Rom. 13, 8-10).
- (iii) In emphasizing the precept of fraternal love, Paul follows the teaching of the Lord.
- (iv) No abolition of the 'first' precept, but the 'first' and the 'second' are fused into one. Christ himself brought the two precepts together, so that one includes the other. Love of neighbour is the normal and necessary expression of our love for God. (I Jo., 4, 20-1)
- (v) Hence Paul reserves the word *agapè* to indicate (besides love of God or Christ for us) our fraternal love.
- (vi) This is shown from an analysis of the texts where *agapè* occurs, from the description in I Cor XIII, and from the intentional juxtaposition of '*pistis*' (love for God) and '*agapè*' (love for neighbour). With respect to the last point, confer '*Biblica*' vol. 40 where Lyonnet explicitly affirms the meaning of this juxtaposition.³
- (vii) This fraternal love is a theological virtue, for:
 - (a) It is grouped with other theological virtues: faith and hope.
 - (b) We love our neighbour by the same love by which God loves the neighbour.
 - (c) He who loves his neighbour loves Christ himself: doctrine of the Mystical Body, one of the principal teachings in St. Paul.
- (viii) The doctrine of the Mystical Body explains how we can *effectively* love God – with a real love that exists between real friends where he who loves does not only receive, but gives –.
(Love conceived as an exchange of goods is a concrete notion of love vividly expressed in Scripture)
But who can ever 'give' anything to God? How could this be ever possible?

³ "... D'autant plus que les autres passages où Paul juxtapose les termes de *pistis* et d'*agapè* autorisent pour le moins une interprétation analogue, et par conséquent en Phm 5 les exégètes n'ont sans doute pas tort, de "de Calvin à Huby en passant par Bengel et Lightfoot", de "dépister un chiasme: la foi se rapportant au Christ et la charité aux saints". Assurément "dans le cas, l'activité charitable de Philomén est une manifestation, voire même une 'œuvre' de sa foi"; il n'en reste pas moins que Paul ne parle jamais de foi à l'égard d'un homme. En fait, pour saint Paul, comme d'ailleurs le plus souvent pour saint Jean lui aussi (I Jo 3, 23), la foi semble bien caractériser l'attitude du chrétien à l'égard de Dieu ou du Christ et l'*agapè* son attitude à l'égard de ses frères..'

The Incarnation made this possible! We can 'give' to God in his Mystical Body.

Fr. Lyonnet's approach is a phenomenological one and that is why his explanation is in many respects like that of some Protestants.

A concrete, phenomenological analysis of the texts, affirms Lyonnet, should leave no doubt about the meaning of agapè in St. Paul's mind!

A CRITICAL NOTE

The concluding part has been titled 'A Critical Note', for the simple reason that the paper should be considered to have been closed with the exposition of Fr. Lyonnet's interpretation; but, since I have promised a critical note here it is!

Of course, to go through all the exegetes and give my view about their explanations would not be a note at all, but another paper, and this I have no intention to do at the moment. At any rate, I shall try to make a few remarks about the main exegetical trends in this matter.

To begin with, it seems to me that there is much point in insisting, as Fr. Spicq has repeatedly done, on the impartiality and objectivity with which the exegete should analyse and interpret the texts. An unprejudiced, calm, objective 'a priori' attitude is of paramount importance to the right understanding of the mind of the writer. What the exegetes should be after is to enquire after the idea which the inspired writer wanted to put across to the readers. To start with an 'a priori' partial attitude or with the idea of proving false your adversary might lead anywhere but to the right solution or explanation!

As far as the language and style of I Cor XIII goes, we think that the 'Hymn of Love' is a rich literary piece of work gushing out from Paul's heart and mind absorbed in God's love and in the interests of the first budding churches of Christ.

As we have seen in the exposition of some of the interpretations, it does not look very easy to determine definitely the meaning of Agapè in St. Paul, especially if one ignores the immediate context or the parallel passages. For it is useless, not to say foolish, to attempt to give the meaning of Agapè in I Cor XIII without taking in great consideration the immediate context of this chapter and without studying it in the light of all the other passages where Agapè occurs. So, we feel grateful to Professor Martin for establishing the context of chapter 13 excellently. It's a great help to have the context so well settled before one starts to analyse and make comparisons with other texts; but the context by itself is not enough, and consequently we do not believe

that Agapè could be rightly interpreted *merely* from its context, as Martin would have us maintain. The word Agapè is found 65 times in the pauline epistles, and let us not forget that every time it was conceived and written or dictated by the same man: Paul! hence, we do not see how one can arrive at the real grasp of the word, if one prescind from the meanings attached to Agapè by Paul in other circumstances. The exegete should examine the import of the word in other contexts and make sure if it bears the same characteristics as the one at issue; and if it does not, he should try to find out what were the circumstances which made Paul emphasize an aspect of the meaning and why this aspect and not another one. By so doing the exegete may succeed in fixing the fundamental meaning of the word in the Apostle's mind. Once this has been done, then it will be possible to find out how this word in this particular context fits in with the basic and fundamental notion of the word in the writer's mind; and this fitting of the word in the general frame-of-the-word (in Paul's mind) will determine the meaning of the word in the particular context. We have said this to stress the fact that the determination of a word does not by any means depend merely on the immediate context. Without a thorough knowledge of St. Paul it's hopeless to manage a valuable, scientific interpretation of such a typical pauline word like Agapè.

Controversy has often prompted study and many exegetical obscure points have been enlightened through controversies; but it is also true that in the heat of a controversy one can easily overlook an important point or lose sight of objectivity.

Fr. Allo's interpretation has been followed by a number of commentators. Allo does not maintain that Agapè can be primarily referred to fraternal love and in his opinion Agapè is the divine love that flows down upon us and that makes us love our brethren. The latter part of his affirmation — especially Agapè taken as God's or Christ's love for us — is found fundamentally in the positions held by Bonsirven, Spicq, and even Lyonnet who, however, disagrees flatly with what Allo says regarding fraternal charity in the first part of the assertion. At any rate, one should be grateful to Allo for establishing a fundamental point of the solution; with respect to this point we find Allo cited by Huby, Bonsirven, Spicq, and others. One may also remember that Allo's main concern was to disprove Harnack's interpretation, and in this concern it seems to Lyonnet that Allo was labouring under some of the disadvantages of a controversy, for he had succeeded more in disproving Harnack's position than in interpreting and determining the text itself.

Well, with respect to this we can say that Allo showed pretty well the fundamental mistake of the protestant exegete; for the patent and fundamental error of Harnack lies in fact that he affirmed that (our love for God is theological but) our love for the neighbour is no more than a moral virtue. In saying that *only* our love for God is theological Harnack definitely missed the boat, but in affirming that Agapè in Paul refers to fraternal charity he still finds exegetes – even Catholic exegetes – defending the same position.

Fr. Bonnard in his article 'Amour' in 'Vocab. Bibl.' maintains that Jesus in his teaching insisted on the unity of the 'first' and 'second' precept, fraternal charity should be conceived as a theological virtue; but both words: 'theological' and 'virtue' are understood in the meaning attached to them by protestants. It is interesting to note, however, that Nygren explains Agapè very much in the way explained by Spicq; it is enough to have a look at the two quotations on pages 28-9 and 30 and draw a comparison between them.

Spicq's interpretation is a very plausible one. It seems to me that it's a right rendering of Paul's mind to say that Agapè in I Cor XIII is, strictly speaking, love for neighbour, but a christian love – 'not a love of flesh and blood', but '*il est donné par Dieu, effet et particip*' of the love by which God loves us. Subject of Agapè in I Cor XIII is '*Dieu et le Christ qui, en nous, aiment notre prochain.*' And I would have gone quite a longer way with Fr. Spicq if he had not based much of his explanation on I Cor VIII, 3 which has the words '*ton Theon*' omitted in the readings of p. 46 and of Clement of Alexandria. Fr. Lyonnet's criticism on this point seems to me to be correct, for Spicq does not seem to have been consistent:

'Le seul exemple proprement paulinien serait I Cor 8, 3:

"ei de tis agapa tôn Theon", mais précisément le P. Spicq se prononce en faveur de la leçon de P. 46 et Clément d'Alexandrie qui omettent' tôn Theon (I p. 223-224; autrement dans la conclusion, p. 308)' (Lyonnet, in Biblica)

Nevertheless it's beyond any doubt that Fr. Spicq's huge work is a priceless contribution to the problem, and I feel sure that his efforts will encourage other exegetes to affront similar scriptural problems with such earnestness and seriousness.

To conclude I make my last remark about Fr. Lyonnet's recent approach to the question. As we have hinted above, Lyonnet's approach is a phenomenological one, and Lyonnet himself affirms that his conclusion is nothing more than the obvious result of this phenomenological

analysis of the use of Agapè by St. Paul. With respect to this concrete study of the texts, there is nothing to say to the contrary; in fact, it's a good sign that the exegete does not intend to project, in any way, his particular frame of mind into the texts to be interpreted.

Lyonnet's explanation of his interpretation and the main arguments supporting this explanation centre in the doctrine of the Mystical Body. This doctrine, we surely admit, constitutes one of the central points in the Pauline Theology, and since the teaching of fraternal love is fundamental in Paul we should not be surprised at all that Lyonnet tried to find the explanation of a fundamental teaching in a central theological doctrine! That fraternal love holds such a prominent place in the writings of Paul has been very well realized by the Fathers, especially in the earlier centuries of the Church (as it is well illustrated by Fr. Prat in the '*Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*'). Lyonnet believes that this patristic understanding of Paul has now been long forgotten and this accounts for the great difficulty the exegetes are finding to see that Agapè in Paul refers to fraternal charity. If this is true, then Lyonnet's efforts should be well appreciated. One should also bear in mind that Lyonnet does not say that Agapè refers *exclusively* to fraternal love; for he does not deny in the least that it refers to God's or Christ's love for us as well. By saying this Lyonnet seems to be maintaining the same interpretation of Spicq who holds that Agapè in I Cor XIII is strictly speaking, fraternal love, but a christian love, the same love by which God or Christ '*en nous, aiment prochain*'. If this is so, then I would say for Lyonnet's position that which I have just said above for Spicq's.

Lyonnet insists that his solution depends wholly on the objective, concrete reading of Paul, and consequently it remains still debateable among exegetes that he has done this reading concretely and thoroughly; it all depends on this!

However, it would be always safer for Lyonnet if in his eventual further study of the problem he will keep to this concrete vision of Scripture, so favourite to him, and avoid, by all means, defining in the abstract what he has found in the concrete. He should be content with the concrete scriptural notion of love and leave the obtruse problems of *love in se* to the speculations of philosophy; after all, it does not serve his exegetical purpose to elaborate philosophically the data he draws from Scripture.

Paul followed closely the teaching of Christ, and therefore, if Christ insisted so much on the precept of fraternal charity, no wonder that Paul did the same! And we must *not* 'look beyond Paul to Jesus for the

law (of love) we teach' as Professor Shepherd dared to say. For in Paul himself we read Christ himself, especially in such a central teaching as that of LOVE.

However, the question is still open to further study, especially after the scientific investigations of the word Agapè carried out by exegetes, and in a special way, by Fr. Spicq.

And so we better wait for further study and deeper understanding of the problem, which are very liable to follow as a reaction to Lyonnet's recent interpretation.

A. G. VELLA S.J.

SOCIOLOGY CAN HELP THEOLOGY

SOCIOLOGY can help theology in at least two ways:

(a) in its old mission of reading God's Book and

(b) in its new task of interpreting the Signs of the Times.

I will survey these two areas, after pausing on the three preliminary concepts of Sociology, Theology and 'help' and before reviewing the ways and means in which collaboration between sociologists and theologians is currently developing.

Both sociology and theology are sciences, but each is so in a different way. Sociology is empirical, and secular; theology is speculative, and divine. Sociology abstracts from integral experience to focus on its formal object of social relations of individuals in society while theology assumes the whole of this integral experience as it concentrates on its formal object which is God and thus seeks the ultimate explanation of man's plight.¹

For our purposes we will describe sociology as 'the science that deals with social groups, their internal forms or modes of organisation and the relations between groups'.² Its raw material is, therefore, the observation of social relations.

Theology, on the other hand, is the science, or rather the *doctrina sacra* which studies 'that which God alone knows of Himself and which He has communicated to us through Revelation'.³ The first task of the theologian is to receive these elements of Faith in Faith. Theology thus becomes a participation in the knowledge of God, thanks to God's own intervention: *quaedam impressio divinae scientiae*.⁴

The difference between the levels at which the sciences operate requires a brief reference to the concept of 'help'. The help which I propose to review is that special kind which consists in the provision of empirical conclusions.

Sociology sees these isolated data not only partially but also in a determined perspective and it presents them to theology in this form. It is then up to theology to re-integrate them at the higher level of man's total experience as the latter is finally rooted in relations with God.

¹ Schillebeeckx E.: *Social Compass*, 1963, p. 275.

² Johnson, H.: *Sociology*, p. 2.

³ ST. I, q. 1, a 6.

⁴ ST. I, q. 1, a 3, 2.

The two areas of this special kind of help which I have chosen to consider have been explored and exploited by the Angelic Doctor, though of course in his own way and according to the conditions then current in theology.

Did not Aquinas make use of the sciences then available in order to read God's Book and the Signs of his Times? The phrase *Usus philosophiae et aliarum scientiarum* in the *Sacra doctrina*⁵ describes the nature of the help offered by sociology to theology. The training in the sciences which he received from the great Albert had shown him the theologian's knack of making use of the partial truths discovered by empirical research in his quest for the whole and ultimate truth.

The science of sociology was not at hand to help St. Thomas. But it would be in his best tradition to 'use it', once it has emerged. The two areas which I have called God's Book and the Signs of the Times will illustrate this point.

I will consider the first under the two aspects of Biblical theology and of patrology.

In recent times various sciences have helped Biblical exegesis. The contributions of such empirical sciences as archaeology and geography, to the right understanding of the Bible have been considerable, if not decisive. But archaeology and geography have provided deeper insights into the relations of man to the land of the Bible; sociology, either explicitly or implicitly, had penetrated the crucial sector of the relations of man to man in Biblical times. The reconstruction of the *Sitz in Leben* or situation in life of the author is the key to the right understanding of the Psalms and other parts of Sacred Scripture. Since man is naturally social and since God has chosen to reveal Himself in and through the community which He called his people, the contribution of Sociology to Biblical theology consists in a reconstruction of the social context in which a particular part of Scripture was written. Sociology thus helps by providing theologians with the raw material of its findings and the precision tools of sociological concepts like structure, function, role, status and behaviour patterns.

The same kind of help is again available to theologians as they grope for the right interpretation of Tradition. As Scripture has to be seen in the light of Tradition, so Tradition itself has to be read in the light of the social context in which it took root and grew. It would be impossible to read the Angelic Doctor intelligently without an overview of the so-

⁵ ST. I, q. 1, a3 ad 2um.

cial context in which he was operating.⁶ And such a background can be provided by Sociology which, in combination with the closely allied discipline of cultural anthropology, provides such concepts like accommodation, assimilation, and value to analyse and interpret both the content of tradition and the social structure through which it is transmitted and perpetuated.

Seen in the light of Sociology, Tradition or 'culture' as Sociologists would call it, takes on a new imposing dimension. It is seen in sharper focus as a living, dynamic process. It ceases to be the drab chronicle of the cut and dry dicta of the Patres in order to become the epic of the best minds and hearts of the Church as they grappled with the basic problems of human existence and relations with God in the context of their own pasts and futures.

Reading God's word is a constant function of theology which thus looks back to the past in order to understand the ever present message of God. Interpreting the Signs of the Times is focusing its attention on the present in order to interpret God's future plans on the world. God speaks to us through the Bible, through Tradition and through the events of our times. I will consider this last area by referring to three closely related themes in to-day's theology, that is,

1. The quest for a theology of the world
2. The effort to make theology relevant
3. The dialogue between the Church and modern man.

1. As the Fathers of the Vatican Council groped their way through the labyrinth of pastoral problems during the first session, their debate was finally pinned down by Cardinal Suenens between the poles of the Church and the World. Paradoxically enough, his otherwise logical division between *Ecclesia ab intra et ad extra* soon fell to pieces as Council Fathers and theologians fought shy of references to the Church and the World. They preferred the phrase the 'Church in the World'. To them it was no longer a question of the Church conquering the World but rather one of the Church being present in the World.

This explains the attention which theologians are devoting to the theology of the World. 'In this twentieth Century with the extraordinary expansion of science and technology, man's mastery over the forces of nature and his planned regulation of the economy is pushing the desacralisation (begun in the Renaissance) to the limits of his awareness.'⁷

⁶ Lonergan expressly demanded this of his students.

⁷ Chenu *Doct* 157, p. 3.

This desacralisation of science and work, of reason and the emotions, of nature and history, of leisure pursuits and culture, of social justice and the State, is not just a historical development but also in direct accord with the Gospel. The Church will be present in the world to-day only if she discerns and assesses the values of this world.

The evolution of the world, through and in man, in brotherly love, is the very soil of the Kingdom. The dualism nature-grace is being replaced by the great pastoral and theological truth of grace in nature. Again sociology can help theology in discerning and describing how the process of the evolution of the world is taking place.

Man, and therefore *social* man, is 'subject' to grace, *capax dei* not only in his person but in his social relations.

These values and their evolution could be the evangelical Signs of the Times: 'interpellations by God across the current of events'. God makes a sign and creation awaits the revolution of the sons of God.⁸ It is up to theology to assess them but it can only discern them with precision if it is helped by sociology. For example:

(a) Sociology points to the modern phenomenon of industrialisation and urbanisation. Theologians refer to the continuous act of creation and thereby discover other aspects of God's creative mystery.

(b) Sociology points to the phenomenon of socialisation and theology interprets it as a hitherto unsuspected side of brotherly love and existence.

(c) Again, when sociology furnishes theologians with such findings as a probability-correlation between leakage and alienation from the Church, and, for example migration to the city or the change from farm to factory work, it sets theologians thinking. They discover that the mere condemnation of city life and factory work is a wrong interpretation of one dogma of faith and consequently they understand this dogma better by discovering that an authentic attitude of faith asks for loyal recognition and integration of such realities into a new deep religious attitude towards life. What is sociologically loss of function for the Church becomes the fore phase of a new sacramental emergence of the Church.

It is a Sign of the Times that we have matured into a greater confidence in the universal immanence of God's graceful action.⁹

⁸ Rom. 8, 19.

⁹ Schillebeeckx E.: *Social Compass*, 1963, p. 275.

2. By focusing on the quest for God's plan for the world, theologians make their work more relevant to modern man. In the process they discover that sociology can furnish them with objective and systematized data on social phenomena. Such hard facts help them judge what is relevant and what is futile and thus lead them to select those areas of research which really matter.

3. The coming of the *revision de vie*, now accepted as the original contribution of our own Twentieth Century to Christian spirituality, has helped us seek God's plan in daily life and, in the process, make our belief in God incessantly relevant. Again, sociology helps theologians describe, define, interpret the events and phenomena of our times. In the process, it prepares them for their dialogue with the world. It cannot but foster that admiration, sympathy, love and respect for the values and autonomy of God's social creation – all conditions for the successful dialogue between the Church and the World. It would be an oversimplification to say that the task of theologians consists in the fuller awareness of the Church while the main contribution of sociologists boils down to a deeper understanding of the World. The two are interpenetrating spheres: the Church herself has a sociological dimension which can be plumbed only by the sociological approach while the World itself has a meaning which can only be fathomed by theology.

These are only indications of the areas in which sociology can help theology. But they lead us to a brief review of the lines along which collaboration is actually developing.

The loss of membership and the passive attitude of its faithful shook the Church of the Twentieth Century and 'brought her back to reality',¹⁰ mostly thanks to the habit of observation. The first traces of this new habit are found in Germany where Nineteenth Century theologian Van Oettingen analysed the correlations between church membership and such phenomena as suicide, divorce, and birth rate. In the U.S., the empirical approach was adopted in the 1920's by E.S. Bounner while in France the breakthrough came with the work of Le Bras. The important fact was that, by the mid-Twentieth Century, the vicious circle of the social irrealism of the Church had been broken.

The idea that the Church must incessantly seek a dynamic equilibrium between the shedding of old patterns and adoption of new ones spread.¹¹ Indeed it became insitutionalized in an organization called FERES, the

¹⁰ Schreuder O.: *Social Compass*, 1965, p. 8.

¹¹ Goddijn H & W., *Social Compass*, 1965, p. 23 ff.

international federation of institutes of social and socio-religious research, whose members pursue the paths of dialogue, relevancy and ultimate reasoning in contemporary social realities. Its institutes are spread over the five continents and theologians would certainly find their theology more challenging and challenged if they stop to ponder on their reports on Church roles and structures, the relations of the Church and the local community and the World. Such an opportunity is being offered to them in the increasingly popular 'mixed' study sessions where theologians and sociologists come to grips with the 'Signs of the Times'.

The horizon seems to be bright, sociology is promising theology more effective help in reading God's book and in interpreting the same Signs of the Times. The two worlds are no longer separate: they have interpenetrated.

Because ultimate reality is 'not many but one'.

BENJAMIN TONNA

BOOK REVIEWS

JOSEPH A. FITZMYER, S.J., *Pauline Theology: A Brief Sketch*. Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1967, pages 88, price 16/-.

PRENTICE Hall is to publish a two-volume 'Jerome Biblical Commentary' edited by Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Ronald E. Murphy O. Carm., and Joseph A. Fitzmyer S.J. For the benefit of students of Biblical studies, the latter set himself the task to extract from this larger work a brief but comprehensive sketch of the theology of St Paul.

In his 'Pauline Theology', Father Fitzmyer, presents in a succinct and up-to-date form, what he calls 'the dominant perspectives of Paul's teaching'. He discusses topics such as Paul's Gospel, the Father's plan of Salvation History, effects of the Salvation Event, man in Christ, the Church, and at times he also compares his views with those of eminent scholars such as R. Bultman.

Apart from these discussions, which are mainly descriptive in character, and which form the bulk of this book, the author enlists and considers five factors that have influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, Paul's thought — Pharisaic-Rabbinical background, Hellenism, the Revelation to Paul, Paul and early tradition and Paul's apostolic experience.

But what perhaps is to be most appreciated by the real student of the Bible is the select bibliography of titles in the principal modern languages that the author has inserted every two or three pages at the end of each argument that he has been discussing. All in all, 'Pauline Theology' is a good, lucid and scholar introduction to Paul's teaching.

G.D.

CARMEL SANT, *The Old Testament Interpretation of Eusebius of Caesarea: The Manifold Sense of H. Scripture*, The Royal University of Malta, 1967, pages 128, price 12/9.

EUSEBIUS of Caesarea is best known as the 'Father of Church History' by his *History of the Christian Church*, which is the most important ecclesiastical history of ancient times.

His activities, however, were of no less importance in the field of the interpretation of Holy Scripture. Eusebius was indeed one of the

leading exegetes of his time; he succeeded in laying down certain principles of hermeneutics, which might have influenced his contemporary interpreters and which are still of valuable help to modern exegetes.

This is the general impression which is imposed on the mind of the reader of Rev. Prof. Sant's work on *'The Old Testament Interpretation of Eusebius of Caesarea'*. Though it is only a small part of his larger work presented for the Degree of Doctor in Holy Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome, the 128-page booklet gives us a good idea of the contribution of Eusebius to the interpretation of Scripture.

Of Biblical and exegetical works we have a considerable part of Eusebius' commentaries on the Psalms and on Isaiah, which are monuments of learning and critical acumen. No wonder that Biblical scholars of all ages have showed great respect towards his works. St. Jerome declared to be a great admirer of Eusebius, not only as an historian, but also as an exegete (*De Viris Illustribus*, 81, PL 23, 689).

Yet several scholars accuse Eusebius to have marred his exegetic works by the use of the allegorical method characteristic of the school of Origen. Even St. Jerome brought forth this remark in Eusebius' Commentary on Isaiah (In Is. Lib. V, 18, 2, PL 24, 179).

Eusebius had his scientific education at Caesarea, where the allegorical method of Origen and of Clement of Alexandria should have been dominant. There was in that city the famous library founded by Origen. Eusebius would hardly be immune from the influence of the Alexandrian School, whose fundamental principle was the use of allegorism in the interpretation of the Old Testament. On the other hand, Eusebius was an historian; he was well acquainted with the historical background of the Bible; he had some knowledge of Hebrew and liked history. This is what the author rightly says in p. 16: 'When Eusebius started to write, this method was in vogue everywhere and therefore he could not escape its influence; it is to be presumed, however, that under the stress of the historical circumstances in which he lived and in view of his own personality it underwent some modification in his hands'.

Prof. Sant goes on to define Eusebius' stand with reference to the multiplicity of the sense, which may be admitted in the interpretation of Holy Scripture. The long erudite exposition of Eusebius' thought leads to this conclusion: 'The ultimate principle of his interpretation is the existence of two kinds of reality: the spiritual and the bodily, the visible and invisible, the one perceptible to the bodily eye, the other only to the intellectual . . . The examination of the relevant texts proves that Eusebius believes that both of them can be expressed directly or indi-

rectly: directly when plain language is used and the meaning of the individual words coincide with their meaning of the literary context, indirectly when figurative language is used' (pp. 120-121).

We may add that Eusebius' stand is perhaps well determined in his '*Demonstratio Evangelica*' (IX, 1, 12; cf. Enc. Catt., V, 851), where he says that the main purpose of Biblical exegesis is to teach spiritual and divine things; but – with evident intention of repudiating excessive allegorism – he adds that the literal sense must be kept in interpreting historical narrative.

So Prof. Sant concludes: 'His historical interest and positive approach draw him nearer to the tradition of St. Irenaeus than to the mystical speculations of Origen especially in his historical and apologetical writings. In his Commentaries on Isaiah and the Psalms he is under Origen's influence; but also here the positive approach is still there' (p. 122).

The book bears the full 'Contents' of the original dissertation which, together with abundant select Bibliography, are only apt to give a general idea of Prof. Sant's valuable contribution to the History of Exegesis.

We hope – as he does – that the other parts of his valuable work would be published in a short time.

D. SPITERI, O.F.M. CAP.