

Book Notes

A biography of St. Joseph, *The King Uncrowned*, is presented by Michael O'Carroll, C.S.Sp., (Westminster, Md.; The Newman Bookshop, 1948. Pp. xiv + 126. \$2.50). Instead of the usual picture of St. Joseph as a kindly old man who worked in his carpenter-shop while Jesus grew up and Mary watched over Him, Fr. O'Carroll shows us a picture of a man who worked out his life in the midst of problems which could be solved only by a man of the greatest integrity. It was his problem to regulate his relationship as spouse and lover to Mary, the Immaculate Virgin. It was also his problem to act as father, protector, and teacher of the Child Jesus. To him God entrusted the duty of guiding the steps of Him who guides the path of the stars. From him Infinite Wisdom chose to learn the little things all children must learn as they grow up. It was his problem as head of the Holy Family not only to earn a living for his wife and the Divine Child, but also to govern the family prudently, humbly, and with the greatest charity. In this, as in the solution of his other problems he taught quietly, patiently, and humbly the most basic lessons of how to handle the husband-wife relationship and the parent-child relationship. In these days when people are seeking for the answers to these self-same problems, and are experimenting often with theories which promise more than they can ever hope to fulfill, it would be well for men to reconsider the concrete example and practical results of the course followed by St. Joseph.

The Snob and the Saint, a collection of Essays, edited by Sister Frances Teresa, S.S.J., with an Introduction by Rev. Harold C. Gardiner, S.J. (Boston: The Mosher Press, 1947. Pp. xii + 151. \$2.00), was the Catholic Book of the Month Club Selection for December, 1947. Most of the essays are taken from America, three are taken from *Magnificat*, three from *Torch*, and one each from *The Catholic World* and *The Catholic Digest*. The title is derived from the first section of the book. Following this there is a section, "For Every Why He Had a Wherefore," another, "When All the World is Young, Lad," and a final one, "Rich is the Tribute of the Grateful Heart." Represented among the authors are: John A. Toomey, S.J., James V. Hart, John Curran, Paul Claudel, Sister Margaret Teresa, S.S.J., Sister Frances Teresa, S.S.J., Arthur MacGillivray, S.J., J. C. Kearns, Thomas Lynam, S.J., Theodore Maynard, Sister Mary Philip, C.S.C., Laura Benet, Dorothy Fremont Grant, Frank J. Sheed, Raymond Grady, Clyde B. Ragsdale, John Louis Bonn, S.J., Joseph Dever, Patrick J. Carroll, C.S.C., Paul Busard, Sister M. Christina, S.S.J., Private Anthony Shaw, Anne Morehead, Charles Phillips, John Farrow, Robert Denvir, Sister Mary Marguerite, R.S.M., Brian McShane, Norbert Engels, and Theodore Yardley. The subjects treated are as varied as life itself. There are views of love and marriage, death and judgment. All the professions, all men and women, are on parade, with only God knowing the true answer whether the people we see are saints or snobs.

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THE PARISH CENSUS-LIST AND MEMBERSHIP IN THE TRUE CHURCH

Since the middle of the sixteenth century, the question of the possibility that occult heretics or infidels might be really members of the Catholic Church has been discussed and disputed among theologians. Although St. Robert Bellarmine was by no means the first writer to have taught explicitly that these occult heretics and infidels could be members of the Church, he was the first to have assembled the battery of theological proofs usually employed by subsequent writers in favor of this thesis.¹ The arguments against St. Robert's teaching on this point were assembled and arranged by Suarez, Tanner, Wiggers, and Sylvius.² Apart from a distinction suggested by Peter Dens during the eighteenth century and a definite contribution by the late Cardinal Billot,³ there has been astonishingly little progress in the treatment of this question since the middle of the seventeenth century.

¹ The thesis had previously been defended by Thomas Netter of Walden, John Driedo, Peter Soto, and Melchior Cano, among others. Cf. Netter, *Antiquitatum fidei catholicae doctrinale*, Lib. II, a. 2, in the Blanciotti edition (Venice, 1758), I, 292; Driedo, *De ecclesiasticis scripturis et dogmatibus*, Lib. IV, c. 2, part 2 (Louvain, 1533), p. 517; Soto, *Assertio catholicae fidei circa articulos confessionis nomine illustrissimi Ducis Wirtenbergensis oblatae per legatos eius Concilio Tridentino*, the chapter *De ecclesia*; Cano, *De locis theologis*, Lib. IV, c. 2, in the *Opera theologica* (Rome, 1900), I, 201.

² Cf. Suarez, *De fide*, disp. 9, sect. 1. This ninth disputation of Suarez' treatise *De fide* deals with the Church. The teaching referred to in this article is to be found in his *Opus de triplici virtute theologica* (Lyons, 1621), pp. 156 ff. Cf. Tanner, *Theologia scholastica* (Ingolstadt, 1627), III, column 136; Wiggers, *Tractatus de ecclesia*, in his *Commentaria de virtutibus theologis* (Louvain, 1689), pp. 110 ff.; Sylvius, *De praecipuis fidei nostrae orthodoxae controversiis cum nostris haereticis*, Lib. III, q. 1, articles 2, 3, and 7, in Sylvius' *Opera omnia* (Antwerp, 1698), V, 236 ff.

³ Dens tried to resolve the problem in terms of a distinction between an occult denial of the faith which was merely internal and one which was outwardly expressed. Cardinal Billot, more perfectly than any theologian before his time, explained membership in the Church in function of the baptismal character. Cf. Dens, *Theologia ad usum seminariorum et sacrae theologiae alumnorum*, 10th edition (Malines, 1880), II, 361; Billot, *Tractatus de ecclesia Christi*, 5th edition (Rome: Gregorian University, 1927), I, 288 ff.

There is, nevertheless, a definite and highly important reason why the priests of our own time should be very much interested in this question. What seems to be the paramount effort of the anti-Christian forces of our own time is directed towards lessening the respect and affection of Catholics for the social organization of the Church as St. Robert Bellarmine described it in his definition of the Church and as he set out to explain it in the course of his book *De ecclesia militante*. People are always being led to imagine that there is some other sort of corporate entity which in one way or another is supposed to stand behind the strictly and completely visible, organized Catholic Church, and which is supposed to be deserving of a man's social loyalty in the supernatural order more completely than the visible organization.

Occasionally this effort takes the crass form of a declaration that preference for the visible Church over what is supposed to be an invisible Church constitutes a kind of evil.⁴ In this, or in some less atrociously erroneous guise, however, the tendency is to decrease or to play down any actual affection for the kind of organization which shows up on the curate's census book.

Now, to put the matter in plain and colloquial English, the question about the possibility that occult heretics may be members of the Catholic Church, the true Church of Jesus Christ, has to do with the accuracy of the parish census report as a listing of the members of the true Church on earth. St. Robert Bellarmine has described the Church militant of the New Testament as a society whose entire membership in any given locality can be known and set down in a census register. He holds that such a group, composed of individuals whose names could be recorded by any diligent assistant, would actually constitute the true Church, the true kingdom of God on earth, in any particular section of the world.

St. Robert teaches, in other words, that a man is actually a part or member of the Catholic Church if, and only if, he possesses those factors which the older theologians designated as the outward, or bodily, or visible, bond of ecclesiastical unity.⁵ Recognizing the fact that the inward bond, which is made up of faith, hope, charity, and other benefits conferred by the Holy Ghost, operates and actually belongs within the framework of the true

⁴ Cf. Watkin's remarks about "ecclesiastical materialism," in *The Catholic Centre* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1943), pp. 139 ff.

⁵ Cf. *De ecclesia militante*, c. 2.

Church, he nevertheless refused to concede that possession of these qualities was requisite for membership in the Church.

Sylvius, on the other hand, was convinced that both the outward bond of unity and at least the possession of true faith from the inward bond were requisite in order to constitute a man as a member of the true Church.⁶ Thus, according to the theory which Sylvius developed so perfectly the curate's census book would not be an accurate register of the membership of the Catholic Church within the area it attempts to cover. A person who could produce a baptismal certificate, who had never publicly repudiated either his Catholic faith or his Catholic allegiance, and who was not an *excommunicatus vitandus* would not necessarily be a member of the true Church. He would have lost his membership in the event that he had destroyed his faith by a secret or even a merely mental sin against this virtue.

The man who follows Sylvius on this point thus holds that the census book or register holds the names of all the members of the Church in any given place, but that it may contain names of non-members also. Since, according to that theory, a man may pass from the status of a member to that of a non-member by the performance of a secret or even of a merely mental act, it follows that in any individual case the man who seeks to record the membership of the Church within a definite area can never be completely sure that his listing is correct. And, in any large number of names, it would seem safe to conjecture that a few were incorrectly listed in the census registers.

Suarez, despite the manifest inconsistency of his teaching on this point, has held that faith and faith alone is requisite and sufficient to constitute a man as a member of the Church.⁷ Thus his theory implies that there are members of the Church whose names are not on the books at all, and that there can be some names legitimately on the books but which actually belong to people who are non-members of the true Church. The curate can only list those people who have those factors which, together, constitute the outward bond of unity. It is, of course, possible that a person may have the true faith without having this outward bond. Such a person would, according to Suarez' teaching on this subject,

⁶ Cf. Sylvius, *loc. cit.*

⁷ Cf. Suarez, *loc. cit.*

actually be a member of the Church. At the same time, however, the curate could have no means of knowing that such a person's name belonged on the list he was preparing.

Thus, to sum this point up, St. Robert holds, in effect, that an accurate parish or diocesan census will list all and only the real members of the true Church within the area covered by the census. The theory of Sylvius means that such a listing would contain the names of all the members of the Church, but that the names of persons who are not members may possibly be included in the list along with those of the genuine members. The theory of Suarez implies that the list contains neither all nor only the names of real members of the true Church of Jesus Christ within this particular territory. The teachings of Suarez and of Sylvius both refuse to admit that a correctly made-up census register would accurately list the membership of the true Church of Jesus Christ within the region it was meant to cover. The people listed in the census register would not be a society at all, much less the true Church. They would be merely a group within which or around which the true Church lived and worked within the area of the census.

Such are the actual implications of these three theories. In the light of these implications, it is quite clear that the priests of our own day must not consider them merely as opinions of academic or of historical interest. There is nothing quite as important to us at the present time as to know what God has taught us about the Catholic Church of the census books. Is this census roll the list of the actual members of the true Church within a particular locality, or is it merely an approximate outline, within which or around which the true Church of the promises lives and operates? That is a question we should be in a position to answer.

And, in order to be able to make that answer intelligently, we should examine the theological proofs which have been employed to support the various theories on this subject since the question was first effectively proposed in the literature of scholastic theology. What is still the most famous battery of arguments on this point is to be found in the tenth chapter of St. Robert Bellarmine's *De ecclesia militante*.

In considering these arguments we must not forget to distinguish between St. Robert's contention that true internal faith is

not requisite for real membership in the Catholic Church and his teaching about the nature of the external bond of unity. The theological reasonings he employed to back up his doctrine that internal faith is not needed for membership in the Church have been regularly employed by ecclesiologists over the centuries. They retain their validity to this day.

On the other hand, the arguments and explanations St. Robert brought forward in defence of his opinion that the baptismal character itself is not required for membership in the Church have never had any important influence in the field of Catholic theology. St. Robert was convinced that any person who professed the true Catholic faith, who was admitted to the sacraments of the Church, and who acknowledged the spiritual authority of the legitimate ecclesiastical pastors, actually is a Catholic, even though that person lacks the baptismal character.⁸ In the tenth chapter of the *De ecclesia militante* observations and arguments favoring this last contention are sometimes interspersed with proofs advanced in support of the thesis that occult heretics must be considered as members of the Church when they are joined to Our Lord by the external or bodily bond of unity. Fortunately, however, the weakness of the first set of reasonings in no way militates against the validity of the second.

The *De ecclesia militante* offers four basic proofs that occult heretics can be real members of the Catholic Church. The first of these is the argument from Scripture, in this case a demonstration from a text in the First Epistle of St. John.

St. John had written that

... even now there are become many Antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last hour.

They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have remained with us; but that they may be manifest, that they are not all of us.⁹

St. Robert was convinced that the people who "went out from us," according to St. John, were heretics, men who had inwardly denied the faith while still outwardly professing it. In this opinion, interestingly enough, the most modern Catholic commentary on this Epistle of St. John concurs.

⁸ Cf. *De ecclesia militante*, c. 10.

⁹ *I John*, 2: 18-19.

St. Robert explained that the people who "went out from us" and who "were not of us" had, for a time, conserved their outward or bodily bond of unity with the Church while their inward or spiritual tie with the society of the disciples was broken. They "were not of us" in the sense that they had none of that inward bond of unity by which Our Lord meant that His followers should be joined to each other within His mystical Body. Nevertheless, at the very moment when these words were verified, the people concerned were still in a position where they had to be considered as members or parts of the true Church.

A man leaves or goes out of the Church only when he ceases to be a member. The people described by St. John were thus still parts or members of the Church before they left this company, even after they had ceased to possess the faith which is the basic element in the Church's spiritual bond of unity.

Although he readily admitted that St. Augustine had not always given exactly the same explanation of these words in the First Epistle of St. John, St. Robert showed that he had explained this passage in terms of occult heretics and their membership within the Church in many sections of his work, including those sections in which he commented on the Epistle as a whole.

The second proof which St. Robert offers for his thesis in the tenth chapter of the *De ecclesia militante* is based upon the common patristic contention that persons who are not members or parts of the Church can have no jurisdiction or authority within the Church. St. Robert then observes that if occult heretics have actually left the Church in the sense that they are no longer parts or members of its society, it would follow that they could have no real jurisdiction or authority within the Church of God. This position, he believed would destroy the very concept of jurisdiction within the Church itself. A Christian could never be absolutely certain that the man speaking to him and issuing commands by the authority of Christ is actually competent to teach or to exercise jurisdiction. This proof has been accepted and developed by most of the authors who have followed St. Robert in teaching that occult heretics can be members of the true Church. It has always been most difficult and embarrassing for the opponents of this thesis. Actually, however, it is primarily

and essentially an aspect of the fourth proof adduced in this same tenth chapter of the *De ecclesia militante*.

St. Robert's third demonstration consists in the citation and the interpretation of a number of patristic texts which tend to confirm his thesis. The fourth proof is the demonstration from reason. The first section of this is merely an application of the significance of the term "body" to the question at hand. St. Robert contends that the human body, as it stands, contains many things which are not animated by the soul, which possess no degree of life whatsoever. He is convinced that the designation of the Church as the body of Christ admits the implication that there are parts of the Church which are utterly devoid of spiritual life, and which are thus without true inward divine faith.

The basic argument for St. Robert's position in respect to this controversy is to be found in the second part of his "proof from reason." He begins this section with the following still unrefuted statement: a denial that occult heretics can be members of the Church involves an admission that the Catholic position with reference to the visibility of the Church is not substantially different from that of the heretics themselves. He took cognizance of the fact that the Catholic controversialists in the dispute against the Protestants had, as a group, charged their opponents with describing the true Church as an invisible entity. He held that, if Catholics are to deny the possibility that occult heretics can be real members of the Church, they are forced logically to infer that their own writers taken as a whole had been in error on this point, and that the true Catholic position was actually that presented by the Lutherans and the Calvinists.

St. Robert adverted to the fact that the Protestant leaders themselves had spoken of certain outward and visible elements of the Church. They had their own "notes of the Church": the preaching of God's word and the administration of the sacraments. They taught that the true Church was to be found wherever these "notes" appeared.

Nevertheless, because they insisted that only good people, those in the state of grace, were really members of the true Church, and because they had to take cognizance of the fact that there are such people as hypocrites, the Catholic controversialists rightly reproached these men for describing the true Church as an invi-

ble entity. From their principles, the Protestants were forced to teach that the true Church was actually a group whose membership could be known with certainty by God alone. The Catholic controversialists considered this implication a definite and manifest condemnation of the Protestant teaching about the Church.

As St. Robert points out, the Catholic writers were perfectly certain that the true *ecclesia Christi*, the kingdom of God on earth, was a company which men could recognize with perfect and objective certitude. They knew that obedience to the Church was something which God had made obligatory, and that there could be no such thing as rational or virtuous obedience to an invisible or uncertain authority.

In other words, St. Robert was convinced that, according to the actual teaching of Jesus Christ, His true Church is a company or a group which men can recognize or ascertain with infallible accuracy. It is a society whose members actually achieve and hold their position as members by the possession of completely manifest characteristics. He could see that if membership in the true Church depended upon the possession of inward faith, and thus upon the possession of an invisible characteristic, the entire Catholic stand in the theological controversies which had occupied the half century before the appearance of his own work would have been completely erroneous.

Oddly enough, the strength of St. Robert's position becomes apparent only when we compare his writing on this subject with the teachings of the most important theologians who hold the opposite opinion. Thus Suarez believes that no man can truly be called a member of the Church unless he is in some way joined to Our Lord by an act of the spiritual life.¹⁰ In stating that principle, Suarez laid the foundation for most of the opposition St. Robert's thesis has encountered throughout the centuries.

Yet, when we examine that principle closely, we find that it is nothing more or less than an oblique statement of the conclusion Suarez was trying to draw out of it. What he presents as a self-evident principle is actually the very thesis he has set out to demonstrate.

His "ad hominem" argument against those who held that occult heretics could be members of the Church is likewise wide of the

¹⁰ Cf. Suarez, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

mark. Suarez insisted that his opponents believed the baptismal character to be necessary for membership in the Church. Many of them did so believe, although St. Robert was not of this number. Suarez held that such persons were inconsistent when they denied that faith was requisite for membership in the Church on the ground that faith is something invisible. The baptismal character itself is, according to Suarez, something quite as invisible as inward faith itself.

Speaking on the same subject some years before Suarez wrote his treatise, Dominic Bannez had mentioned visible and invisible causes of union in the Church and had "included the invisible character under the name of the visible cause, that is, the sacrament."¹¹ For, although the baptismal character is invisible when considered simply by itself, it is definitely and completely recognizable in its cause. It is something which is produced necessarily and irrevocably in the reception of the visible sacrament of baptism. Faith is something which a man can destroy within himself, secretly or openly. No man who has once received the sacramental character can ever cast it away.

Thus, once we know that a man has been baptized, we know with certainty that he has the baptismal character. On the other hand, the knowledge that a man has been baptized or has made a public profession of faith in no way infallibly implies that he possesses the virtue of divine faith at this given moment. It is astonishing to see these two factors, faith and the baptismal character, rated as equally invisible in any work of theology.

Suarez had a very imperfect notion of the visibility of the Church. He described this visibility as the characteristic by which the true Church could be distinguished from the various congregations of Satan, in other words primarily as the property according to which the Church could be made manifest by a demonstration based on the notes of the Church. He believed that individual members of the Church could be recognized and designated as such with "a prudent judgment." The entire Church, however, as distinguished from its individual member, he considered recognizable with infallible accuracy.¹²

¹¹ *Scholastica commentaria in secundam secundae Angelici Doctoris D. Thomae*, in q. 1, a. 10 (Venice, 1588), col. 286.

¹² Cf. Suarez, *op. cit.*, sect. 8, p. 176.

The other opponents of St. Robert's thesis were scarcely more impressive than Suarez in their arguments on this point. Wiggers held that the dispute was mainly a matter of terminology. He believed that St. Robert's thesis was "more common," and also that it seemed "more perfectly in conformity with the writings of the ancients." When he came to explain his teaching, however, he insisted that occult heretics "seem to be members of the Church in an imperfect way, and, as it were, only analogically." All of his arguments actually go to support St. Robert's position.¹³

Sylvius defends his thesis with arguments from the nature of the Church, from Scripture, and from the writings of the Fathers. Actually the reasoning of this great theologian seems valid only as a demonstration of the necessity of the baptismal character for membership in the Church. He was quite correct in insisting that the mere profession of faith, apart from the baptismal character, could never suffice to make a man truly a member of the Church militant. He was quite incorrect, however, in insisting that internal faith was requisite for this purpose.

In defence of his own position, Sylvius had to teach that a man could be the head of the Church without being a member or a part of it.¹⁴ Thereby he contradicted the common teaching that no man can have authority within the Church without being a part of this society.

He was compelled, moreover, to offer a strikingly inadequate explanation of the visibility of the Church. Sylvius taught that Catholics do not reproach the Protestant writers for making the Church invisible precisely because they made the possession of sanctifying grace a requisite for membership, but partly because they spoke of an invisible Church which consisted of the predestined, and again in part because their "notes of the Church" were inadequate.¹⁵ In explaining the visibility of the Church, Sylvius constantly evades any real discussion of a society whose members are definitely and surely recognizable as such, claiming that it is enough to have a *bona fiducia*, as distinct from real certitude, about the identity of individual members of the true Church.¹⁶

¹³ Cf. Wiggers, *loc. cit.*

¹⁴ Cf. Sylvius, *op. cit.*, q. 1, a. 7, p. 243.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 2, a. 1, p. 254.

¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 2, a. 2, p. 256.

Patrick Murray offers two pontifical statements as indications in favor of his thesis, that occult heretics cannot be members of the Church.¹⁷ The first is the famous passage from the *Ineffabilis Deus*, in which Pope Pius IX declares that those who think in their heart otherwise than in the way he has defined, should realize "that they are condemned by their own judgment, that they have suffered shipwreck about the faith, and that they have fallen from the unity of the Church (*et ab unitate Ecclesiae defecisse*)."¹⁸ The other document is the Bull *Cantate Domino*, issued by Pope Eugene IV. In this document the Pontiff writes that persons who dissent internally from the truths he has defined are denounced as alien or foreign from the body of Christ which is the Church.¹⁹

Neither the *Ineffabilis Deus* nor the *Cantate Domino* contains teaching pertinent to the question about the membership of occult heretics in the Catholic Church. Both of these documents insist that a man who commits a merely internal sin against the faith, and who destroys the virtue of divine faith within himself, has in some way cut himself off from the Church. When we say that faith is actually an element of one of the bonds of union within the Church, we necessarily imply all that either pontifical document has to say in this regard.

In order to defend his own position, Murray found himself compelled, in the final analysis, to deny the possibility of truly occult heresy. He believed that heresy necessarily manifests itself, and that thus there is no practical danger of teaching the existence of an invisible Church when one denies the possibility of membership of occult heretics within the true Church of Christ.²⁰ Thus Murray sought to resolve the problem by denying that the problem exists.

An examination of the arguments adduced by those theologians who, throughout the centuries, have denied that occult heretics can be members of the true Church brings to light a somewhat confused teaching about the visibility of the Church on the part of the men who have adopted this position. None of these theologians

¹⁷ Cf. Murray, *Tractatus de ecclesia Christi* (Dublin, 1860), I, 202 f.

¹⁸ *DB*, 1641.

¹⁹ *DB*, 705.

²⁰ Cf. Murray, *op. cit.*, 195 f.

could admit that the names in a census book in a parish where the census is properly taken actually constitutes the membership roll of the true Church militant of the New Testament within the particular area covered by the census. All of them are forced to assert that the names on the census list constitute a group within which members of the true Church are to be found. Those who long ago agreed with Suarez would have to admit that the parish list would contain some members of the Church and some non-members, and also that some members of the Church in that particular territory would not be on the parish roll. The followers of Sylvius, on the other hand, would have to claim that all of the members of the Church militant of the New Testament within this locality are contained on a properly made-up parish census list, but that this list could also contain some non-members.

The men who could be listed in a parish census are the ones whom the world, and, for that matter the Catholics themselves, must recognize as the Catholic Church, the company over which the Roman Pontiff presides. If this particular company, as it stands, is not the kingdom of God on earth, then the attitudes of Suarez and Sylvius can be justified. But if the group subject to the Roman Pontiff in this world, the group actually known and recognized as the Catholic Church, really is the kingdom of God on earth, then, logically, it would appear that the thesis of St. Robert Bellarmine on the membership of occult heretics in the true Church of Jesus Christ should be accepted without question.

Obviously St. Robert's teaching that the baptismal character is not requisite for membership in the Church has no serious standing in current theological teaching. No man can be a member or a part of Our Lord's kingdom on earth without that God-given capacity for the Church's Eucharistic worship which we designate as the sacramental character of baptism. That character, however, is, in its cause, a complete visible reality. The man who possesses it is manifestly joined to Christ by the Church's outward bonds of unity. The visibility of the Church is, in the last analysis, definable only in terms of that outward bond.

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