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Book Notes

Four of the beautifully written booklets of the late French Catholic champion, Henri Gheon, are brought together in a single book as *Secrets of the Saints* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1944. Pp. 406. \$3.00). The biographies, all complete and unabridged, are those of St. John Baptist Vianney, St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Margaret Mary, and St. John Bosco. It was Gheon's particular talent to describe holiness in commonplace surroundings without making the holiness itself look commonplace.

A second edition of Father Andrew J. Krzesinski's *Is Modern Culture Doomed?* (New York: The Devin-Adair Co., 1944. Pp. 182. \$2.00), has recently been issued. The book, worth while in its own right, carries a preface by the late Msgr. George Barry O'Toole.

The short *Treatise on the Spiritual Life* written by St. Vincent Ferrer (1346-1419), first printed at Magdeburg in 1493, has been a great favorite with many saints and pious souls. An English translation of this work from a French edition has recently been published (1944) by The Newman Bookshop of Westminster, Md. This little book is meant especially for religious, having been written at the instance of a religious of the Order of St. Dominic. However, anyone interested in Christian perfection will find in it so much heavenly wisdom as to make it seem intended particularly for him. In this respect it resembles the *Imitation of Christ* even though more restricted in scope and less comprehensive.

The first American edition of *The Reign of Jesus Through Mary* by Gabriel Denis, S.M.M., has been published by the Montfort Fathers (Bay Shore, N. Y., 1944. Pp. xiv + 297. \$1.00). This edition is somewhat enlarged. It is divided into three parts. The first part contains the known doctrine of Blessed

L. Grignon De Montfort. The second is a practical application of that doctrine to everyday life. The third part offers prayers and spiritual exercises in the spirit of the De Montfort doctrine. The specific doctrine of Bl. Grignon De Montfort is contained in two short works: *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* and *The Secret of Mary*. The second work is really a summary of the first. A special devotion to Mary, the *Mediatrix gratiarum*, is commonly regarded as a sign of predestination. It is undoubtedly one of the most powerful means of salvation. This little book is both an introduction and a practical guide to such a devotion. Some expressions in this devotion, such as "the holy slavery of love," will not appeal to everybody. After all, the common language of the gospel (John 19:27) and of the Church speaks of Mary as our Mother or our Queen. "Slavery" does not sound well to Christian ears. However, the mystic connotation of the word is easily understood. It is one of those exaggerations of love which should not be taken according to the letter. The fact that the last three Popes have praised this devotion should recommend it to everybody.

A recent addition to that new branch of Catholic literature which consists of reprints of broadcast talks is Fr. Martin C. D'Arcy's *Belief and Reason* (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, Ltd., 1944. Pp. 106. 5 shillings.) Fr. D'Arcy's addresses were delivered in England in the fall of 1942. Much of the material is of course purely insular in interest. The American priest will not be aided a great deal by discussion of the views of Lord Vansittart or Mr. Kingsley Martin on the present status of Christianity. He will, however, find in this little volume a better than average presentation of Catholic truth over what has come to be a very important medium for Catholic indoctrination.

CONTENTS

- A Parochial Plan for Converts . . . John T. McGinn, C.S.P. 161
Franz Werfel's Credo . . . Edward A. Wuenschel, C.S.S.R. 172
Christian Culture and the Outlook in America
James A. Magner 187

- The Proof of the Church's Divine Origin
Joseph Clifford Fenton 203

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

- Suffrages for a Deceased Non-Catholic 220
A Vocation to the Priesthood 221
Bread and Wine for the Holy Sacrifice 222
An Exegetical Problem 222
Stations of the Cross *Coram SS. Sacramento* 223
The Pectoral Cross and the *Cappa Magna* 224
Masses Which May Be Said as Votives 225

Contents Continued on Next Page

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THE PROOF OF THE CHURCH'S DIVINE ORIGIN

The fact that the Catholic Church was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ is a truth capable of real demonstration. It is likewise a fact which is energetically assailed and denied by modern opponents of Catholicism. In the face of these attacks, and in the light of the pressing need for an effective proof of this doctrine occasioned by the sharp increase in home missionary activity in this country today, it will be helpful to examine the proofs of the Catholic Church's divine origin, as these proofs stand in the literature of sacred theology at the present time.

A careful inspection of the matter will show, I believe, that, although we have ample material for a convincing proof that our Lord instituted the Church during the course of His public life in this world, the arrangement of the evidence usually found in our theological literature fails to bring out the full force of the demonstration. There is, however, a method of presenting the evidence in such a way as to show clearly that, at the time of our Lord's ascension into heaven, the Church existed as an organized and visible society, manifestly brought into being by Him. In order to understand the nature and the effectiveness of this proof, we must examine first some of the current errors about the origin of the Church, and then the Catholic dogma and its presentation in theological literature.

THE ERRONEOUS TEACHING

Among those who deny the divine origin of the Catholic Church, there are some who maintain that our Lord did not found any religious society at all. They consider His work as primarily political in character. Thus, in what Ernest F. Scott rightly calls a "learned but preposterous book,"¹ Robert Eisler tries to prove that our Lord was a mere political agitator, put to death by the Romans after a brief but spectacular insurrection in the city of Jerusalem.²

¹ *The Nature of the Early Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), p. 208.

² Cf. *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist according to Flavius Josephus' recently rediscovered "Capture of Jerusalem" and the other Jewish and Christian Sources*. English edition by Alexander Haggerty Krappe (London: Methuen and Co., 1931), pp. 567 ff.

Salomon Reinach, renowned for his virulent bias against Catholicism, naïvely accepts Eisler's contentions and incorporates them into his fantastic account of "Christian Origins."³

Rather recently Rabbi Solomon Zeitlin has offered a new and somewhat restrained version of this theory. He informs his readers that, for the first two decades after the crucifixion, both the Jewish and the Roman authorities looked upon the followers of Christ as a political group, "since they were the followers of Jesus who had been acclaimed as the King of the Jews." He concedes that later the group ceased to be, and to appear as, a political party. "In due time this group lost its political aspect and became religious, and it was later persecuted by the Romans as a religious sect which sought to destroy Roman society and state."⁴

Part of the tactic of those who deny that the Catholic Church owes its origin to our Lord is the now all-too-familiar attempt to indicate St. Paul as the founder of the Church and of the Christian teaching. In line with this tendency, Josef Kastein writes that, although no one man may properly be called the founder of any religion, St. Paul comes as close to possessing this distinction as any other. This author, whose hatred for our Lord and His Church is as venomous as that of Reinach, teaches that our Lord's followers were "renegades," and justifies the action of Judas in betraying Him. According to Kastein, Judas eventually found that "The man before him showed no readiness to illuminate, no ardent desire to fulfill; he was merely aiming at power."⁵ Incidentally, two other widely read authors, Bernard Heller⁶ and Joseph Klausner,⁷ classify our Lord among the "false messiahs." In his usual colorful fashion Rabbi Lewis Browne ascribes to St. Paul the sup-

³ Cf. *Orpheus. A History of Religions*. Translated by Florence Simmonds (New York: The Liveright Publishing Co., 1941), pp. 249 f.

⁴ *Who Crucified Jesus?* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1942), p. 180. In a brilliant review of Zeitlin's book in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, V (1943), 232 ff, Monsignor William L. Newton, S.S.D. exposes its glaring errors.

⁵ *The History and Destiny of the Jews*. Translated from the German by Huntley Patterson (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1936), pp. 160 ff.

⁶ *The Odyssey of a Faith* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1942), pp. 118 f.

⁷ Cf. *From Jesus to Paul*. Translated from the Hebrew by William F. Stinespring (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1943), p. 256.

posed fact that "in later years the Nazarene faith began to take on the color and shape of those heathen cults and strange philosophies . . ."⁸

Joseph Klausner, despite his manifest scholarship, conducts as savage and meaningless an attack on the origin of the Church as any of his fellows. Speaking of the Jews' attitude towards our Lord, he somewhat pompously tells us that "Neither can they regard him as a lawgiver or the founder of a new religion: he did not even desire to be such."⁹ In another place he describes St. Paul as "the clearly self-conscious creator and organizer of Christianity as a new religious community." Klausner admits that previous writers had exaggerated the influence of St. Paul, but he still insists that "This Saul was the real founder of Christianity as a new religion and a new church after it had been in existence for some years as a Jewish sect and Israelite congregation alone."¹⁰ He agrees with Eisler and the rest that "Jesus of Nazareth was crucified as 'The King of the Jews'—as a political rebel."¹¹ Klausner, however, has the historical honesty to deny that our Lord was really guilty of this offense.

Typical of the "liberal Protestant" teaching on the origin of the Church is the declaration of Kenneth Scott Latourette. True to the Reformation contention that the true Church of Christ, the Church of the promises, was essentially an invisible affair, while the visible society or societies were always subordinate to this invisible assembly, Dr. Latourette holds that Christianity arose because of elements in our Lord's life and doctrine and denies that Christianity was ever confined to any one system.

The Christianity which spread in the Graeco-Roman world arose, then, out of impulses given by the career of Jesus. However, that religion was never merely the words and deeds of Jesus, but these in the forms in which they were remembered and transmitted, the experiences of individual Christians, and the interpretations given the mem-

⁸ *This Believing World*. Fifth printing (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1941), d. 279.

⁹ *Jesus of Nazareth. His Life, Times and Teaching*. Translated from the original Hebrew by Herbert Danby (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1944), p. 414.

¹⁰ *From Jesus to Paul*, pp. 582, 303 f.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 563.

ories and the experiences. It follows, therefore, that from the outset Christianity has been varied. It has not been a single system of beliefs and practices which has expanded.¹²

Two other liberal Protestants, Professors A. T. Olmstead and Walter Marshall Horton, agree that the original Jewish followers of Christ simply considered themselves as forming one more sect within the Jewish religious commonwealth, differing from their co-religionists only by the fact that they recognized our Lord as the Messiah. According to Olmstead, the Hellenists, and according to Horton, St. Paul and the Gentile Christians came to ascribe to our Lord dignities different from and superior to those which were acknowledged by the primitive followers.¹³

All of this is quite in harmony with the teaching of Harnack, who held that, about the middle of the third century, the Church was "a new commonwealth, politically formed and equipped with fixed forms of all kinds," while 150 or 200 years previously there had been "only communities who believed in a heavenly Church, whose earthly image they were."¹⁴ A radical error in all these views is the illusion that the existent Church was in some way formed by a process of federation out of previously existing groups which were somehow sympathetic with our Lord. This view is widespread, although there is no jot of evidence to support it.

An off-hand observation by the distinguished archeologist, Dr. Chester Charlton McCown, betrays the existence and the source of this confusion. He writes that "One of the perhaps fortuitous, but decidedly enigmatic, silences of history lets the Galilean followers of Jesus, who must have numbered thousands, drop into complete oblivion, while Jerusalem, the murderer of the prophets and of Jesus, significantly becomes the center of the new faith."¹⁵ Apart

¹² *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*. Volume I. *The First Five Centuries* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1937), p. 61.

¹³ Cf. Olmstead, *Jesus in the Light of History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), pp. 253 ff.; also Horton, *The Growth of Religion*, by Harry Nelson Wieman and Walter Marshall Horton (Chicago and New York: Willett, Clark and Co., 1938), Part I, *The Historical Growth of Religion*, by Walter Marshall Horton, p. 144.

¹⁴ *History of Dogma*. Volume I. Translated from the third German edition by Neil Buchanan (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1902), p. 45.

¹⁵ *The Ladder of Progress in Palestine. A Story of Archeological Adventure* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1943), p. 254.

from the words "fortuitous," "enigmatic," and "significantly," which seem to indicate a ponderous attempt at levity by the learned author, the passage is a frank admission of the fact that McCown thinks that the Church was originally composed of all the men and women who could in any way be designated as followers of or sympathetic with our Lord. He obviously believes that the society of the disciples existed in Galilee as well as in Jerusalem at the outset, and seems convinced that the Jerusalem group has achieved undue prominence.

THE CATHOLIC DOGMA

The truth to which all of these errors are opposed has thus been expressed in the "Oath against the Errors of Modernism": "Likewise I believe with firm faith that the Church, the guardian and the teacher of the revealed word, was founded immediately and directly by the true and historical Christ Himself while He was dwelling among us, and that it was built upon Peter, the prince of the apostolic hierarchy, and upon his successors forever."¹⁶ The truth contained in this dogmatic formula is something which has been recognized and taught by the Church since it began to exist. It is a part of the deposit of revelation, the message which God has confided to the Church as something which is to be taught and guarded infallibly until the end of time. Thus it has always been a part of the dogmatic message of the Church, and, at the same time, a truth recognized and proposed by the corps of Catholic theologians.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE OLDER THEOLOGIANs

Despite the fact that the truth itself belongs to the deposit of divine public revelation, however, the formation of a theological demonstration in favor of this truth is something comparatively recent in the history of scholastic theology. From the thirteenth to the sixteenth century the theologians' teaching about the origin of the Church was pretty much in line with the distinction formulated by Moneta of Cremona and again, almost four centuries later, by Francis Suarez. According to this distinction, the Church, considered as the congregation of the faithful, that is, as including all those men and women who have accepted the deposit of divine public revelation, began in the time of our first parents. The Church

¹⁶ *DB*, 2145.

of the New Testament, however, actually began to exist prior to the ascension. Moneta took the fact that our Lord gave the Holy Ghost to the disciples as a proof of the divine foundation of the Church.¹⁷ Suarez, on the other hand, used the elements of a much more complex demonstration in showing that our Lord had instituted the Church Militant of the New Testament. He cites the passage "upon this rock will I build my church." He then appeals to the unanimous testimony of the Fathers and of the scholastic Doctors. As a framework for a proof from reason, Suarez notes the fact that our Lord instituted the sacrifice, the sacraments, the priesthood and the order, out of which the corporate unity of the Church arises.¹⁸

St. Robert Bellarmine does not make the thesis that our Lord established the Church a part of his *De Ecclesia militante*. In the *De notis Ecclesiae* he refers to it only indirectly, in dealing with the note of antiquity. He set out to show that each of the heretical religious societies had separated from the Church just as fully as the Church itself had broken away from the synagogue. Nevertheless St. Robert's explanation is fully as interesting to present-day theologians as that which had been offered by Suarez.

According to St. Robert, six conditions are found verified whenever there is an outstanding change in religion. There is first an authority, and in the case of the Church this authority is Christ, its founder. Secondly there is some new doctrine, and the beginning of the Church brought with it the first explicit belief in the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Then there must be a definite time to which the origin can be ascribed, and St. Robert notes that the Church began to be preached in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. A new religion must have a place of origin, and the Church arose in Judea. As a fifth condition there must be opponents, and the scribes and pharisees, and then the Gentiles were the enemies of the new Church. The sixth condition is most interesting. St. Robert taught that in the founding of a new religion there must be a small society comprising the original initiates, which later spreads abroad. He simply notes that, at the time

¹⁷ Cf. *Adversus Catharos et Valdenses Libri Quinque* (Rome, 1743), Lib. V, cap. 2, pp. 408 ff.

¹⁸ Cf. *Opus de Triplici Virtute Theologica* (Lyons, 1621), Tract I, Disp. 9, sectio 2, pp. 162 f.

that the Church separated from the synagogue, the Christians were much fewer than the Jews.¹⁹

The attitude of Suarez and St. Robert prevented the much more complex theory of the great fifteenth century theologian, the Cardinal John de Turrecremata, from exercising any great influence in scholastic literature. Turrecremata had taught that there were four ways of describing the origin of the Church Militant of the New Testament. When we speak of this origin in those who first believed through a mental or inward vocation, the Church may be said to have begun with our Lady. If we are dealing with the origin of the Church among those who were called by our Lord's preaching, then we should say that the Church began with the first vocation and gathering of the disciples. If we speak of the origin of the Church in terms of the firmness of its faith and the perfection of its missionary activity, then it began on the first Christian Pentecost. Finally, if we attempt to describe the foundation of the Church in terms of the sacraments by which that Church is formed, then the Church may be said to have begun with the Passion of Christ.²⁰ Only the second and the fourth points in Turrecremata's explanation have survived in the literature of scholastic ecclesiology.

Francis Sylvius, treating of the time when the Church of the New Testament had begun to exist, taught that it started when our Lord began to preach. True to the tradition of Douai, Sylvius appealed first to the authority of St. Augustine. Then he reasoned to his conclusion from the facts that, even before the resurrection, there was a society of the faithful attached to Christ as the Head and professing their faith in Baptism, and that, according to the Council of Trent, the apostles had been priests of the New Law even prior to the resurrection.²¹

Serious attention was not given to the theological proof of the thesis that our Lord had founded the Church before His ascension until about one hundred years ago. We find this thesis treated at some length in the manuals of Knoll, Liebermann, Perrone and

¹⁹ Cf. *De Controversiis Christianae Fidei adversus Huius Temporis Haereticos*, Tom. I (Ingolstadt, 1586), *Quartae Controversiae Generalis Liber Quartus. De Notis Ecclesiae*, cap. 5, col. 1341 f.

²⁰ Cf. *Summa de Ecclesia* (Venice, 1560), Lib. I, cap. 24, pp. 267 ff.

²¹ Cf. *Libri Sex de Praecipuis Fidei Nostrae Controversiis cum Nostris Haereticis*, Lib. III, *De Ecclesia*. q. III, a. 2. In the *Opera Omnia* (Antwerp, 1698), V, 265 f.

Murray, although this last includes it among his *Notiones praeviae*, rather than in the body of his text. Knoll used the prophecies of the Old Testament, the teaching and the acts of Christ, and the history of the early Church to support his thesis.²² Murray offered only a relatively brief treatment from Scripture and from history, on the grounds that all Christians recognized the fact that our Lord had instituted a Church.²³

THE CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGIANS

The persons who complain of rigid uniformity in modern scholastic theology would be greatly surprised if they were to examine a few modern manuals on the thesis of the divine origin of the Catholic Church. With perhaps one exception, and that not too important, any of these manuals will give students the material necessary for an accurate and effective proof that the society which we know as the Catholic Church really owes its origin to our Lord. In general, much the same material is offered in all of these texts. There is, however, no trace of uniformity in the arrangement of the material. It would seem that the Catholic ecclesiologists, as a group, have not devised any one disposition of the matter for proving that Christ actually founded the Church.

The great American theologian, Anthony Charles Cotter, S.J., divides his matter into several distinct theses. First he proves that our Lord preached the Kingdom of God as a visible religious society. Then he points out that Christ willed that this society should be one, indefectible, and necessary for all men. He indicates the grant of power to the apostles, and the giving of the primacy to Peter. The perpetuity of this primacy is demonstrated, and then the author proves that it belongs to the Roman Pontiff. All of these conclusions converge to the thesis that the Catholic Church alone is the true Church of Christ.²⁴

²² Cf. *Institutiones Theologiae Dogmaticae Generalis seu Fundamentalis* (Turin, 1868), pp. 351 ff.

²³ Cf. *Tractatus de Ecclesia Christi* (Dublin, 1860), I, 131 ff. It is interesting to note that Murray, one of the most erudite of the nineteenth century theologians, refers only to Libermann, Knoll, and Perrone as authorities for the thesis *de institutione Ecclesiae*, making no reference to earlier writers.

²⁴ Cf. *Theologia Fundamentalis* (Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College, 1940), pp. 346 ff.

Christian Pesch approaches the thesis from the angle of the divine magisterium. He begins by proving that our Lord instituted a living apostolic teaching office to guard and propagate His doctrine. After showing that this magisterium was established as something infallible, Pesch proves that the apostles also received the powers of jurisdiction and of order, and that a genuine primacy was promised and then granted to St. Peter. He then comes to the conclusion that, by instituting the apostolic college under the primacy of Peter to teach, rule, and sanctify men, Christ became the author of the supernatural religious society which He called His Church.²⁵ Ludwig Lercher and Canon Hervé use a somewhat similar method, treating separately of the establishment of the Church as an hierarchical and as a monarchical society.²⁶

Adolphe Tanquerey gave a good proof of the fact that our Lord instituted the Church as a permanent organization, as a society in the strict sense of the term, by appealing to our Lord's own life, as described in the Gospels, and to apostolic history. He shows that Christ promised a Church and then actually founded it. The foundation consisted in the instruction about the nature of this society, and then in the act of establishing a common end, designated subjects, proper authority, and means for the attainment of this end. The apostolic history begins with the life of the Church after Pentecost.²⁷ With a somewhat similar approach, Van Noort emphasizes the fact that our Lord made the profession of the same faith, the communication in the same rites, and subjection to the same rule incumbent upon all His followers.²⁸ Paris points to the activity of our Lord in establishing the laws, gathering, and ordering the members of the new society, and the strengthening of this congregation by His gifts.²⁹ Like Tanquerey and Van Noort, Bainvel appeals first to the Gospels, and only then to the other

²⁵ Cf. *Institutiones Propaedeuticae ad Sacram Theologiam*, 6th and 7th ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1924), pp. 184 ff.

²⁶ Cf. Lercher, *Institutiones Theologiae Dogmaticae*, 2nd ed. (Innsbruck, 1934), I, 272 ff.; also Hervé, *Manuale Theologiae Dogmaticae*, 19th ed. (Westminster: Maryland: The Newman Bookshop, 1943), 285 ff.

²⁷ Cf. *Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae Fundamentalis*, 24th ed. (Paris, Tournai, and Rome, 1937), pp. 420 ff.

²⁸ Cf. *Tractatus de Ecclesia Christi*, 3rd ed. (Amsterdam, 1913), pp. 7 ff.

²⁹ Cf. *Ad Mentem S. Thomae Aquinatis Tractatus de Ecclesia Christi* (Turin, 1929), pp. 16 ff.

books of the New Testament in proving that our Lord founded the Church. Bainvel phrased his thesis to show that our Lord instituted the Church as a distinct visible society, within which the Christian religion exists, and outside of which it does not exist.³⁰

Archbishop Valentine Zubizarreta's historical proof centers around the evidence in the Gospels that our Lord did everything requisite for the founding of a visible society. He stresses the fact that Christ gathered a group of disciples, united them by faith and by the sacraments, and gave them a definite corporate end to be achieved under the direction of pastors whom He designated.³¹ Anthony Michelitsch and Bernard Bartmann use a like approach, and the former gives far more documented evidence.³² Emil Dorsch and John Sylvester Berry both emphasize our Lord's promise to found a Church and the actual institution, perfected in the apostolic commission.³³ Reginald Schultes demonstrates the origin of the Church from Christ by the doctrine of the Kingdom, the expression of our Lord's will, the testimony of the apostolic Church, of St. Paul, and of the post-apostolic Fathers. Canon Joseph Lahitton offers what would seem to be insufficient evidence, merely indicating our Lord's promise, and St. Paul's teaching on the Church as Christ's body.³⁴

Heinrich Dieckmann, like Lercher and Hervé, centers his historical proof about the establishment of the apostolate and the primacy. A magnificent explanation of the teaching on the Kingdom of God is prefaced to this historical proof. Dieckmann enhances his treatment of the question by distinguishing between three states of our Lord's Church. The initial period lasted from the beginning of our Lord's public life until the Passion. The

³⁰ Cf. *De Ecclesia Christi* (Paris, 1925), pp. 23 ff.

³¹ Cf. *Theologia Dogmatico-Scholastica ad Mentem S. Thomae Aquinatis*, 3rd ed. (Bilbao, Spain, 1937), I, 278 ff.

³² Cf. Michelitsch, *Elementa Apologeticae sive Theologiae Fundamentalis*, 3rd ed. (Graz and Vienna, Austria, 1925), pp. 255 ff.; also Bartmann, *Précis de théologie dogmatique*. Traduit de l'allemand, sur la huitième édition, par l'abbé Marcel Gautier. 2nd ed. (Mulhouse, France, 1936), II, 159 ff.

³³ Cf. Dorsch, *Institutiones Theologiae Fundamentalis*, 2nd ed. (Innsbruck, 1928), II, 25 ff.; also Berry, *The Church of Christ*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis and London: B. Herder Book Co., 1927), pp. 19 ff.

³⁴ Cf. *De Ecclesia Catholica Praelectiones Apologeticae* (Paris, 1931), pp. 38 ff.

fundamental period extended from the Passion until Pentecost. With Pentecost the Church entered on its status of formal existence.³⁵

Louis Billot has managed to grasp the spirit of the classical ecclesiologists in his thesis that Christ ended the Mosaic religion, and that He first announced His Church by preaching it as the fulfillment of the Old Testament, then, before His Passion, He made it ready in proximate preparation, and that He finally founded it after the resurrection. This Church, according to Billot's thesis, began to live its own life as a perfect society distinct from the synagogue and began to expand immediately after the first Christian Pentecost.³⁶

THE TEACHING OF BISHOP D'HERBIGNY

Michael D'Herbigny, however, adopts an entirely different approach. Where Billot and all the rest had started from the accounts of our Lord's acts and teachings in the Gospels, and had used the Acts of the Apostles as a kind of complementary source, D'Herbigny begins with the observation that before the destruction of Jerusalem there flourished a new religious society called the Church, a society which asserted that it had been established by our Lord as the heir to God's promises and commissioned to gain all nations to the worship of the one true God. The second portion of D'Herbigny's demonstration on the divine origin of the Church considers the thesis that this society was formed neither haphazardly nor by the design of the apostles, but by our Lord, acting intentionally.³⁷

It would seem, at any rate, that D'Herbigny's treatment of this matter is far more effective than that offered by his fellow ecclesiologists. Where the other modern theologians had concentrated on a demonstration that our Lord established a visible religious society during the course of His public life, D'Herbigny set out

³⁵ Cf. *De Ecclesia Tractatus Historico-Dogmatici* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder and Co., 1925), I, 195 ff.

³⁶ Cf. *Tractatus de Ecclesia Christi sive Continuatio Theologiae de Verbo Incarnato*, 5th ed. (Rome, 1927), I, 67 ff.

³⁷ Cf. *Theologica de Ecclesia*, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1927), I, 37 ff. D'Herbigny has a preparatory thesis on the Messianic expectations among the Jews in the time of our Lord.

to prove that the visible religious society properly called the Church had actually been established by our Lord. To achieve this end he first examined the existent society, as it appeared prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. Only then did he give his attention to the Gospel verification of the claims which this society made about its establishment by our Lord.

D'Herbigny's method simply reverses the arrangement used by the other writers. The portion of the truth which they take as subsidiary, D'Herbigny uses as the primary element in his demonstration. Where Billot and the others first showed that our Lord had spoken and acted in such a way as to imply that He was founding a religious and visible society, and then turned to the Acts of the Apostles for confirmation of this doctrine, D'Herbigny first shows the existence of a Church instituted by Christ, and then turns to the Gospels for evidence to show *how* this society was formed. His method has a clarity and a concrete approach which seems to make it far superior to that of his fellow ecclesiologists.

Yet even D'Herbigny's presentation of the thesis leaves something to be desired. His proof for the divine origin of the Catholic Church rests ultimately upon the evidence that there was a religious society in Jerusalem prior to the destruction of that city, manifesting itself as an organization formed by our Lord. The fact of the matter is that the source which he uses is capable of showing the truth of the thesis much more effectively. The Acts of the Apostles contain the information that, immediately after our Lord's ascension into heaven, the Church was in existence as a visible and organized society which had obviously been formed by our Lord during the course of His public life. A demonstration which starts with this evidence would seem to be the most effective means for showing the divine origin of the Catholic Church.

THE BASIS FOR EFFECTIVE DEMONSTRATION

The point to be proved in expounding the Catholic truth about the origin of the Church is the fact that this society was instituted immediately and directly by our Lord, and formed while He was still among us in this world. Thus, according to divinely revealed teaching, the essential work of bringing the Church into existence was completed at the moment of the ascension. Thus the claim of the Church, as expressed in the "Oath against the Errors of Mod-

ernism," is that it was an existent society at the time when our Lord terminated His public life on earth. Manifestly the best demonstration of this truth will rest on evidence that the Church lived and acted as an organized and visible society immediately after our Lord ascended into heaven.

Now an organized society includes both persons who rule and those who are ruled. This is true in the case of the Catholic Church as well as in the case of any other social unit. Thus, when we say that the Catholic Church was instituted by our Lord, we imply that there were rulers who had received their powers and their commission from Christ, and that there were other persons who had been gathered into the group by our Lord and made subject to the power of the ecclesiastical leaders. When we state that Christ instituted the Church while He dwelt among us, we mean that, at the moment of the ascension, there was in existence a religious society which He had formed, and within which some members exercised authority over others in the name and by the commission of Christ.

The first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles gives the pertinent and essential evidence in this regard. It shows very clearly that, when our Lord rose up into heaven, He left behind Him, not only an apostolic college, but a formed and complete society within which Peter and the other apostles wielded authority. This society obviously owes its being and organization entirely to our Lord. It was not a group gathered together by the apostles after the ascension. It was in existence at the moment when our Lord rose up into heaven.

St. Luke thus describes the events immediately subsequent to our Lord's ascension:

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount that is called Olivet which is nigh Jerusalem, within a sabbath day's journey.

And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James of Alphaeus and Simon Zelotes and Jude the brother of James.

All these were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.³⁸

³⁸ Acts, 1:12-14.

According to this passage, the social unit which Christ left in this world at the moment of His ascension into heaven was one in which the apostles were joined with our Lady, with the holy women, and with the brethren of the Lord. All of these persons were united in prayer. Their petition to God was a corporate act.

The brethren of the Lord mentioned in the fourteenth verse of the first chapter in the Acts of the Apostles were obviously not merely the group of men related to Him by ties of blood. The very next verse tells of an address of Peter to these brethren, and the number involved makes it perfectly evident that they were simply the members of the society over which Peter and his fellow apostles presided.

In those days, Peter, rising up in the midst of the brethren, said (now the number of persons together was about an hundred and twenty):

Men, brethren, the scripture must needs be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was the leader of them that apprehended Jesus:

Who was numbered with us and had obtained part of this ministry . . .

Wherefore of these men who have companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us,

Beginning from the baptism of John, until the day wherein he was taken up from us, one of these must be made a witness with us of his resurrection.³⁹

This document makes it evident, as well as any historical record possibly can, that the group which met in Jerusalem immediately after the ascension and before the first Christian Pentecost was one which, as a unit, had been with our Lord during the course of His entire public life. According to St. Peter's words, some of those who had been members of the group from the outset had never been elevated to the ranks of the apostolate. In other words the group had included from the beginning some men who were chosen as apostles and others who had not been thus chosen. Thus the net effect of our Lord's working upon the group had not been merely the commissioning of some ecclesiastical leaders. It had manifestly been the organization of a complete and visible religious society, the society which existed and acted during the days intervening between the ascension and Pentecost.

³⁹ Acts, 1:21-22.

In the light of the data contained in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, it is easy to use the evidence of the Gospels to their full effectiveness. St. Peter was given supreme jurisdictional power and the members of the apostolic college were all given real authority within the Church, according to the four evangelists. The evidence of the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles makes it clear that St. Peter and his fellow apostles received power which they were commissioned to exercise within the group of which they themselves were members, the group which our Lord had gathered around Him, the group which appears as a fully formed society, acting under the direction of Peter and the other apostles immediately after our Lord's ascension into heaven. Thus, in the light of the Acts, it is obvious that the product of our Lord's social activity was not merely a corps of leaders competent to enlist followers, but a complete and visible religious society. The evidence of the Gospels can be used to show how the leaders of this society received their commissions from our Lord.

Starting from the dicta of the Gospels, it is easy enough to show that our Lord gathered certain persons around Him. It is easy also to indicate that the apostles themselves were chosen from among the followers or disciples of Christ. But no source shows quite so clearly as the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles that the disciples, who manifestly appear as a group in the Gospels, appeared immediately after the ascension of our Lord as a fully organized religious society, as a religious social unit formed by our Lord.

This society of the disciples is the Church of the promises. It is the organization, and the only organization, which received our Lord's assurance, immediately before the ascension, that He would remain with it until the consummation of the world. It is the society into which the converts to Christianity were to be introduced if they were to be saved "from this perverse generation."⁴⁰ As a matter of fact it was to the members of this visible society of the disciples that the term "Christian" was first applied,⁴¹ and it is to them alone that it properly belongs.

The society which was in existence at the moment of our Lord's ascension into heaven was fairly numerous even at that time. About one hundred and twenty heard the first command which St.

⁴⁰ Acts, 2:40.

⁴¹ Acts, 11:26.

Peter gave to the new Church, and there is no reason whatsoever to suspect that this figure included all of the membership of the society. It would be extremely unlikely that the holy women, or that young children, would be brought into a meeting which was expected to work towards the selection of a new member of the apostolic college.

St. Paul informs us that on one occasion the risen Saviour was seen by "more than five hundred brethren at once."⁴² Most probably this appearance took place before the ascension. In any event, it is quite certain that the society which existed in Jerusalem during the days between the ascension and Pentecost was not top-heavy by reason of too many leaders for the total membership. The society included at least one hundred twenty persons, and may well have counted over five hundred members. An organization such as this, directed by one supreme leader, assisted by ten other men in authority, is a well-formed social unit. That was the unit which our Lord gathered together, formed into a society, and left behind Him in this world at the moment of His ascension.

THE ADVANTAGES OF THIS METHOD

When we base our proof of the divine origin of the Church on the evidence of the first chapter in the Acts of the Apostles, and then bring the information in the Gospels to explain the formation of the society described by St. Luke, we are in a position to protect our own people against the most dangerous modern misunderstanding about the Church's origin. The claim that the followers of our Lord were originally a band of political rebels is too ridiculous and too obviously devoid of serious scientific foundation to trouble an inquirer. There is, however, another and a subtler kind of error regarding this matter. The people who hold what amounts to the standard liberal Protestant view about the origin of the Christian Church seem to labor under the illusion that the Church was originally a society which gathered about the apostles. They imagine it as composed of a group of sympathizers with Christ, a group which was scattered throughout the regions which had been favored with our Lord's own ministry. They believe that groups in various cities and towns of Palestine eventually

⁴² 1 Cor., 15:6.

united in a kind of social union, and that the resultant society is the thing which we know as the Church.

The method of proving the divine origin of the Church from the evidence of the four Gospels alone, or even the method of starting the proof from the evidence of the Gospels, could do very little to unseat this error. The Gospels shows us the picture of our Lord granting power to St. Peter and to the apostolic college. They do not show clearly that this power was granted as something which was to be exercised within a group which was in existence at the very moment when that power was granted; a group which became a fully organized society at the moment that certain of its members were given jurisdictional power within it. The first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles shows this society as a complete and visible organization. Thus it would seem to be the best starting point for an effective and convincing proof of the Church's divine origin.

Strange to say this method is by no means new. It was the usual procedure of the great counter-Reformation controversialists to insist upon the fact that the Church was the society which had started from Jerusalem. Against the advocates of an invisible Church as the true Church of Jesus Christ, men like Driedo and Stapleton took care to point out that the true Church of the promises was the one which had lived in Jerusalem,⁴³ the visible society into which the converts of the first Pentecost were incorporated, and with which every man must be associated if he is to attain the end of eternal salvation. In this way they made it clear that the the original and true followers of our Lord were not a mere group of sympathizers who gathered themselves together, but a real society, the group of our Lord's disciples, formed by Him into the perfect and visible organization which is His Mystical Body.

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⁴³ Both Driedo and Stapleton had introduced the concept "*incipiens a Hierusalem*" into their descriptions of the true Church. Cf. Driedo, *De Ecclesiasticis Scripturis et Dogmatibus* (Louvain, 1530), p. 510; and Stapleton, *Principiorum Fidei Doctrinalium Demonstratio Methodica* (Paris, 1579), Controversia I, Lib. IV, cap. 6, p. 114; and also the *Principiorum Fidei Doctrinalium Relectio Scholastica et Compendiaria* (Antwerp, 1596), Controversia I, Quaest. 5, art. 1, p. 125.