

THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CURRENT PROBLEMS

The Committee on Current Problems of the Catholic Theological Society of America met on Wednesday, November 11, 1953, at Woodstock College, Woodstock, Maryland. The primary purpose of this meeting was to fashion a list of theological topics to be submitted to the Board of Directors at their annual meeting in order to help them determine the program for the 1954 Convention. Present were the following members of the Committee: Fathers Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., Chairman; Eugene M. Burke, C.S.P., representing Msgr. Thomas J. McCarthy; Edward J. Hogan, S.S.; Ferrer Smith, O.P.; Paul E. Waldschmidt, C.S.C., representing Bernard E. Ransing, C.S.C. The meeting began at 4:00 p. m. and adjourned at 6:00 p. m.

The topics finally decided upon, together with a brief summary of the Committee's deliberations on each topic, were presented to the President and the Board of Directors at Holy Redeemer College, Washington, D. C., November 18, 1953. They were as follows:

FUNDAMENTAL AND DOGMA

- [1] *Theological Qualifications and the Assent of Faith.* So many authors and textbooks have their own private systems of "notes," their own individual interpretations of qualifications such as "theologicæ certæ," "proxima fidei," etc., that it appears imperative to put some sort of unity into this confusing diversity. Cf. the recent work on the subject by Sixtus Cartechini, S.J., *De valore notarum theologicarum* (Rome, 1951). Recommendation: emphasis on the notes, but the whole problem to be approached from the act of faith.
- [2] *Theology and Contemporary Science.* A carry-over from last year's topics. Would include: (1) the role of logic in theology; (2) the role of dialectical reasoning in theology; (3) the first proof of God's existence in the light of modern logic, semantics, symbolic logic, modern physics; (4) the Allocution of Pius XII: modern science and the existence of God; (5) the role of the angels in the physical universe; (6) St. Thomas' tract (I, qq. 65-74) on corporeal creation in the light of modern science.
- [3] *Modern Protestant Concepts of the Church.* It was suggested that the survey and synthesis be limited to attempts

that have been made since the 1948 World Council of Churches at Amsterdam to redefine the Church; cf. Karl Ludwig Schmidt; Emil Brunner; Nelson's *Realm of Redemption*.

- [4] *The Ecumenical Movement*. This would include (1) an historical conspectus of the movement; (2) the points of agreement between Catholics and the ecumenists, and the areas of hopeless disagreement; (3) the nature and extent of Catholic participation in the past; (4) the nature and extent of possible Catholic participation in the 1954 Evans-ton Conference on the preliminary level.
- [5] *Catholic Understanding of "Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus" in the Light of the Issues Raised by Father Feeney*. It is recommended that such a paper (1) search out the issues raised by Father Feeney, together with their more significant and specific applications; (2) present the Catholic answer to Father Feeney in the light of these issues. Such a treatment will necessarily deal with the various historical contexts involved, e.g., the position of St. Augustine in the Donatist controversy.
- [6] *Historical Development of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception: Obstacles Inhibiting Understanding and Acceptance*. The subtitle indicates the emphasis desirable: a synthesis of the problems, difficulties, beliefs, ideologies (on the theological, biological, physiological, historical levels) which have, in the course of Christian thought, hindered an accurate, adequate intelligence of the Immaculate Conception, even in Catholic circles. Thus: scriptural difficulties, the universality of original sin and redemption, the very nature of marriage, the theory of concupiscence as the efficient cause of concupiscence, the 11th-12th-century understanding of original sin, etc. Further possibilities: effect of the definition on conception of marriage and conjugal love, etc.

ASCETICAL

- [7] *Infused Contemplation as the Normal Development of the Life of Grace and the Virtues*. Briefly: a discussion of Garrigou-Lagrange's thesis. Again, as last year, it was strongly urged that this be presented as a debate. An introductory paper (by a chairman) would put the whole thing in focus: the theology of the spiritual life, with reference to the central issue, i.e., perfection and infused contemplation. For the debate proper, names mentioned were: J. R. Gillis, O.P., Sebastian Carlson, O.P., R. Aumann,

O.P., James M. Egan, O.P., G. Augustine Ellard, S.J., Elmer O'Brien, S.J. This topic, together with the dogmatic subject listed under [6] above, elicited the greatest enthusiasm from all members of the Committee.

- [8] *Nature of the Infused Moral Virtues*. Are they "potentiae" in the same way as the theological virtues? How do they differ from the acquired virtues? Essentially, or merely in the way they are acquired? Briefly: what are they? It was agreed that this topic is likely to be handled better in seminar fashion.
- [9] *Theological Status of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost*. Aspects to be considered: What certitude attaches to the various facets of the gifts? What is the function of the gifts? Again, more satisfactory treatment in seminar.

MORAL

- [10] *The So-Called New Morality*. The fundamental problem is that of diminished imputability, which has been brought into sharper focus by M. Oraison's *Vie chrétienne et problèmes de la sexualité* and the *Situationsethik* to which Pius XII made reference in two 1952 Allocutions. Implications: art without morality, politics without morality, marriage without morality. Suggestion: connect with psychiatry and psychology, in an effort to discover what, if any, positive contribution has been made by the authors in question. Cf. *Allocutions of Pius XII*: (1) To midwives, Oct. 29, 1951; also "Fronte della famiglia," Nov. 26, 1951. (2) "De conscientia christiana in iuvenibus recte efformanda," Mar. 23, 1952; also, to Fédération mondiale des jeunesses féminines catholiques," Apr. 18, 1952. (3) "Conventui de psychotherapia et psychologia," Apr. 13, 1953; also "Conventui de histopathologia systematis nervorum," Sept. 13, 1952. Also: Commentaries by Hürth in *Periodica*. Cf. J. Ford, *Depth Psychology, Morality, and Alcoholism* (1951); Gagnon-Carr, "A New Conjugal Morality?," *Amer. Eccl. Rev.* 127 (1952) 173-81; M. Thiéfry, "La justice, doit-elle cesser de 'juger' et de punir?," *Nouv. revue théol.* 73 (1951) 466-82; G. Vann, in *Blackfriars*, Sept. 1953.
- [11] *The Problem of Penal Law*. The question has been the subject of unusual attention in the past year; cf. the articles by Father John Connery and Father McGarrigle in the *AER*.

- [12] *Principles of Limitations with Respect to Catholic Participation in non-Catholic Ethico-Religious School Programs.* How far can we go in co-operating with public or private schools in the projected programs or curricula which involve "teaching spiritual values" or "presenting all religions on an objective basis," etc.?
- [13] *Moral Problems Seminar.* This would deal, not with any individual problem, but with four or five topics which are of current interest or have arisen perhaps for the first time in consequence of contemporary crises. Such would be:
- (a) *Morality of Supersonic Speeds.* Recent evidence indicates that such activity involves a lessening of control, of co-ordination, of imputability; that it provides sex-stimulus; that it can lead to evils such as an incapacity for carrying on normal life.
 - (b) *Public Relations in Modern Times.* Moral principles governing public relations as carried on today; falsification or misrepresentation in advertising (e.g., radio announcer "plugging" an article with a commercial of whose truth he is not convinced). More broadly: public relations as the known source of misrepresentation of facts, as one of the foundations of secularism.
 - (c) *What Constitutes Literature Obscene or Pornographic?* We need a practical, working definition, e.g., for Catholics in the Post Office whose task it is to judge whether literature in the mails is obscene or not.
 - (d) *Prudential Exercise of Censorship.* Principles governing such action, with respect to movies, books, plays. Who is to do the censoring—when—how? This might well include the Legion of Decency B List and its obligation.
 - (e) *Resistance Movements.* Morality of such movements in general; circumstances under which such activity is licit, obligatory, prohibited; liceity of, e.g., the U. S. inciting such movements.

SUGGESTED PROGRAM

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| PAPERS: | [6] | Immaculate Conception |
| | [7] | Infused Contemplation |
| SEMINARS: | [5] | Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus |
| | [1] | Theological Qualifications |
| | [10] | So-called New Morality |

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