

THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CURRENT PROBLEMS

The Committee on Current Problems of the Catholic Theological Society of America met on Wednesday, October 27, 1954, at St. Mary's Seminary, Roland Park, Baltimore, 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 1955 Convention. Present were the following members of the Committee: Fathers Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., Chairman; Edward J. Hogan, S.S.; Kenneth B. Moore, O. Carm.; John M. Paul, C.S.P. The meeting began at 4:00 p.m. and adjourned at 5:50 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 17, 1954. They were as follows:

FUNDAMENTAL AND DOGMA

- [1] *The Concept of Biblical Theology*. This involves, e.g., (1) precise nature of biblical theology; (2) how Scripture communicates to us knowledge of revelation; (3) the nature and function of the Scripture proof in theology; (4) the role of the Catholic exegete, etc. Strongly recommended by the Committee as a full-length paper. Suggested expert: Fr. Roderick A. MacKenzie, S.J., Jesuit Seminary, Toronto. Background: cf. J. Levie, in *RSR* 39 (1951-52) 237-52; *NRT* 71 (1949) 1009-29; F. M. Braun, in *Revue thomiste* 53 (1953) 221-53; C. Spicq, in *RSPT* 34 (1951) 561-74; J. Bonsirven, *La théologie de NT* (Paris, 1951), cf. Introd.; G. Florovsky, in *Dieu vivant* 21, pp. 97-105; D. Stanley, in *CBQ* 16 (Oct. 1954) 385-425.
- [2] *The Theological Significance of History*. A clarification of concepts and issues is desirable, e.g., a distinction between the philosophy of history and the theology of history; presentation of the problems involved and the solutions that have been offered. It was suggested that a critique of Toynbee's Vols. 7-10 from the viewpoint of theology is desirable.

- [3] *The Principals of Extra-Sacramental Justification*. Examination of this problem, in addition to being a highly interesting incursus into the field of dogmatic theology, would cast additional light on the important and practical dictum, "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus."
- [4] *Eastern Orthodox Theology*. What are the issues which separate us at this moment? Survey of real disagreements, sheer misunderstandings; indication of practical present-day approach to the Orthodox. Therefore, not simply a history of Orthodox thought. Suggestion: contact member of Russian Institute at Fordham University, e.g., Fr. Wilcock.
- [5] *Mystical Body as the Immolated Victim in the Mass*. An explanation is desirable of the words of Pius XII in *Menti nostrae*: "sacrificium, quod Divinus Redemptor . . . in Calvariae monte obtulit, non sui proprii corporis tantummodo immolatio fuit. . . . Idem profecto in Eucharistico sacrificio contingit. . . . Christus . . . non modo semet ipsum, sed christianos universos et quodam modo omnes etiam homines offert et immolat" (*AAS* 44 [1950] 666). Cf. recent criticism of liturgical writers on this score.
- [6] *The Obligation of Intellectual Adherence to Papal Pronouncements*. Survey of the theological principles involved; indication of the general attitude of priests and people with respect to the authority of the Pope when speaking as head of the Church and when speaking "as a private theologian."
- [7] *The Moral Rearmament Movement*. Theological principles governing attitude toward, and participation in, the Movement. Cf. recent letter of California Catholics to their bishop[s] asking for some clarification in the matter.
- [8] *The Theology of the Sacramental Character*. What is the sacramental character *in se*? What is common to the three sacraments involved? Effect of sacramental character? Emphasis on participation in the priestly office of Christ; e.g., how much of that is had through baptism?
- [9] *Theology OF the Laity*. Notion of layman; relation of theology of the laity to ecclesiology; priesthood of laity; laity and teaching authority; laity and governing authority; laity and apostolate; "spirituality" of the laity. Relation of the above to theology of history, theology of work, theology of terrestrial realities. Was strongly recommended by Committee as seminar in ascetical theology, but with stress on dogmatic bases. Cf. Congar, *Jalons*. . . . (Paris, 1953); Philips, *Le role du laicat*. . . . (Paris, 1954). Cf. addresses of Pius XII to all classes of people, all avocations.

- [10] *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? Best handled as ascetical seminar.

MORAL

- [11] *The Theology of Venial Sin.* Consideration of the nature of venial sin; its effects on the individual and on the supernatural state; perhaps discussion of the morality of imperfections.
- [12] *Cooperation with non-Catholics in Ethico-Religious School Programs.* How far can Catholics go in cooperating with public or private schools in projected programs or curricula which involve, e.g., "teaching spiritual values," or "presenting all religions on an objective basis"?
- [13] *Problems of Professional Secrecy.* General moral principles involved; then, and particularly, contemporary applications: (1) Political field, e.g., invitation to communicate confidential information involving State issues. (2) Spiritual field: liceity of spiritual directors revealing extra-sacramental knowledge about penitents after death, etc. (3) Medical field, e.g., liceity of revealing, or obligation to reveal, diseases where States require certificate of freedom from certain diseases. Recommended highly by Committee as full-scale moral paper.
- [14] *Moral Aspects of Sterilization.* This problem is increasingly important in the light of contemporary events, e.g., the Baltimore judge who recommended sterilization in the case of a mentally handicapped woman. Other problems, such as sterilization of TB patients.
- [15] *Atomic and Hydrogen Warfare.* Moral principles involved; liceity of "preventive warfare" with such weapons; limitations of strategic as distinguished from tactical warfare; cooperation on part of soldiers or of civilians in war industry; liceity of threat to use such weapons, even if not intended; effects of radiation.
- [16] *Conscientious Objectors.* Attitude of Church to one claiming such objection on Catholic grounds. To what extent can a CO claim immunity from any and all penalties? Cf. allied question of right to follow conscience unimpeded, no matter what the State says, as opposed to State's right and obligation to procure the common good.

- [17] *The Problem of Penal Law*. Cf. recent articles, e.g., Frs. Conery and McGarrigle in the *AER*. Suggestion aspects: (1) tax problems; difference between direct and indirect taxation. (2) Oath problem: does the fact that the State requires an oath mean that the State sees more than a purely penal issue here?
- [18] *Catholic Teaching on National Sovereignty and World Government*. The relationship that should obtain between the two; the right of an individual country to hold out against the common good; etc.
- [19] *Obligation of Parents to Send Children to Catholic Schools*. If violated, what sin is involved? How far does the obligation extend? High-school? College? On what grounds? In what circumstances?

SUGGESTED PROGRAM

- PAPERS: [1] The Concept of Biblical Theology
[13] Problems of Professional Secrecy
- SEMINARS: [6] Adherence to Papal Pronouncements [Fundamental]
[5] Mystical Body as Immolated Victim [Dogma]
[9] Theology OF the Laity [Ascetical]
[17] The Problem of Penal Law [Moral]

WALTER J. BURGHARDT, S.J.,
Woodstock, Md.