

## A RECENT THEOLOGICAL TRANSLATION<sup>^</sup> ]

When it first appeared in 1952, Dr. Ludwig Ott's *Grundriss der Katholischen Dogmatik* was widely acclaimed and was translated into many European languages. In May, 1955, it was translated by Dr. Patrick Lynch and edited by James Canon Bastible, D.D., under the title *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*. Three years later, a second edition appeared and the editor, in a foreword, noted that "Dr. Ott's work has appealed not only to priests and religious but to a very wide circle of layfolk." In this article, we shall attempt to assess the value of this English translation.

Two problems, however, confront us. Firstly, we have not been able to procure a copy of the German original and consequently we have been forced to make a comparison between the French translation, *precis de rhéologie Dogmatique* published by Salvator-Casterman in 1955 (subsequently referred to as F) and the English translation of Bastible-Lynch (subsequently referred to as E). The reader will be left to draw his own conclusions concerning the value of the English translation on the basis of this comparison.

Secondly, the number of discrepancies between the translations is so great that we have been obliged to limit our detailed comparison to a mere ninety pages (E.352-415) which cover the Sacraments in general, and the special treatment of Baptism, Confirmation and the Blessed Eucharist. Even within this narrow scope, we can select only a few of the very many discrepancies.

We may divide our analysis into two main sections. The first concerns patent errors which are found in E; the second details passages which are extremely obscure and ambiguous in E and which are presented clearly and logically in F.

### A. ERRORS

E.329, line 25ff: "This may be seen, in particular, by the use of the prepositions 'out of . . . and 'through' . . . and (in Latin) by the use of the ablative of instrumentality and of the dative." F concludes the sentence as follows: ". . . by the use . . . of the dative or (in Latin) of the ablative of instrumentality." Clearly, distinction is made between Greek which expresses instrumentality by means of the dative, and Latin which employs the ablative.

E.335, line 22: This contains a mis-translation of St. Thomas: 'cuius sacerdotio' is translated 'to whose character.'

E.337, line 9f: "Holy Scripture attests that Christ immediately instituted the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, Penance and Consecration." Consecration is not among the seven sacraments instituted by Christ. It seems clear that E has translated 'Weihe'(Orders or consecration) by a meaning which is unwarranted by the context.

E.337, line 32ff: Under the thesis: "Christ fixed the substance of the sacraments. The Church has no power to alter them," we read: "It follows from the immediate institution of the Sacraments by Christ that their substance is immutably fixed for all time. The institution of a new Sacrament would involve a substantial change." The context is not directly concerned with the institution of new sacraments but with the question of substantial change in the seven. F translates the final part of the passage logically as: "Change of the substance would be equivalent to the institution of a new sacrament."

E.337, line 40ff: "Whether Christ ordained the matter and form of the sacraments specifically (in specie) or in general (in genere) is a matter of controversy, that is, whether He laid down the specific nature of the Sacrament or whether He merely gave the idea of the Sacrament in general and left the closer determination of the matter and form to the Church." All theologians agree in affirming that Christ laid down the specific nature of the Sacrament (i.e., its purpose and the graces conferred in it). F is correct theologically when it declares the matter of controversy to be whether or not Christ laid down "the specific nature of the *sacramental sign*" (i.e., the visible rite).

E.338, line 31: "For the existence of seven Sacraments a seven-fold proof can be adduced." These are then enumerated as 1. Theological Proof; 2. Proof from Prescription; 3. Historical Proof; 4. Speculative Foundation. The rest fail to appear. F invokes a "triple proof," adducing the first three and citing the speculative proof merely as theological reasoning.

E.345, line 16f: "The intrinsic ground is this that the Sacraments receive their grace of conferring power." E obviously means their power of conferring grace.

E.354, line 7ff: "By a decision of Alexander III (1159-81), rejecting a proposition of the Belgian theologian F. Farvacques, by a decision of Alexander VIII (1690), and by the declaration of the Decretum pro Armenis . . ." Alexander III lived 500 years before the Belgian theologian. F. correctly reads: "According to a decision of Alexander III (1159-81), according to the condemnation of a proposition of the Belgian theologian F. Farvacques by Alexander VIII (1690) and according to the declaration . . ."

E.383, line 15: Emmanuel Maignan is designated O.Min. However Maignan was not a Franciscan as this title would indicate, but of the Order of Minims (O.Minim.) as F rightly indicates.

E.387, line 32ff: "That the worship of Latria is due to the Eucharist may be shown directly from Holy Writ in that, on the one hand, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, on the other, the right of Christ to adoration, are indicated. . . ." This can scarcely be called a direct proof. F correctly designates this proof as indirect.

E.392, line 11ff: "In Christian antiquity ordinary, that is leavened, bread was used also in the Eastern Church (St. Ambrose, *De Sacr.* IV, 4, 14: panis usitatus)." F correctly reads "in the West."

E393, line 16f: ". . . to the whole prayer of thanksgiving, which is contained in the narrative of the institution." Obviously, it is the prayer of thanksgiving which contains the narrative of institution.

E.394, line 20f: "the recipient, the grapes into which the supernatural life of grace flows." F reads, in line with the normal interpretation of the allegory of the Vine, "the branches into which . . ."

E.396, line 33ff: "Supported by St. Augustine (sic!), St.

Thomas teaches that, according to the intention of the Church, baptized persons should desire the Eucharist, since Baptism is directed towards the Eucharist, which perfects the work of Baptism, i.e., incorporation into the Body of Christ. S. Th. III, 73,3." E. misunderstands St. Thomas completely. The latter teaches not that the baptized *should* desire but that objectively they do desire the Eucharist in virtue of their Baptism. F gives the correct interpretation of St. Thomas.

E.405, line 19f: "the play upon words in Mt. 5, 23 et seq." In this passage there is no question whatever of any play on words. F correctly reads "the allusion to Matthew." "Anspielen" means to play or to begin to play: "anspielen auf" means simply to allude to!

E411, line 17f: "The theory (i.e., the Mystery Theory of Dom Casel) was rejected in 1947 by Pope Pius XII in the Enc. 'Mediator Dei'." This theory was not so much as mentioned by the Encyclical. F reads "The Encyclical 'Mediator Dei' seems contrary" to it. The difference is considerable!

## **B. OBSCURITIES**

E.331, line 17ff: "But while these older theologians attributed to the Sacraments a physical causality in respect of the disposition mentioned, Billot ascribed to them an intentional causality, that is, they have the power of designating and communicating a spiritual conception." The latter phrase makes no sense whatever. F reads: ". . . Billot attributes to them an intentional causality, i.e., that they have the power of designating and communicating a spiritual disposition." This is a faithful presentation of Billot's theory. Furthermore, in the critique of the various systems of sacramental causality, E omits any reference to moral causality, though F treats it along with the other theories.

E.335, line 29: The sacramental character distinguishes

"the consecrated from the non-consecrated." The religious is a consecrated soul, but is not distinguished from others by means of a character. E. really means "the ordained from the non-ordained."

E.336, line 40ff: "Christ would have instituted the Sacraments mediately only if He had left the determination of the sacramental operation of grace and of the corresponding outward sign to the Apostles and to their successors." It is fairly clear that E has translated "Wirkung" (effect or operation) by a meaning unwarranted by the context. F reads ". . . the determination of the supernatural effect of each sacrament. . . ."

E.337, line 46ff: "The declaration of the Council of Trent . . . on the other hand, seems to favour specific institution, as the expression 'Sacraments,' according to the proximate sense, designates the concrete substance, that is, matter and form. . . ." F reads ". . . because the expression 'substance of the sacraments' designates directly the concrete substance, that is, matter and form. . . ."

E.339, line 10ff: "This is shown in its liturgical books, in its declarations at the Union Council of Lyons . . . and in its official confessional writings." F makes the last phrase clear: "in its official professions of faith."

E.339, line 17ff: "The Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople answered the Tübingen Professors . . . in association with Simeon of Thessalonica. . . ." Simeon died in 1429, 150 years before this answer was given. F translates ". . . resting on Simeon of Thessalonica."

E.342, line 36ff: "As an instrument is effective in virtue of its principal cause, so the efficiency of the Sacrament is independent of the subjective constitution of the minister" (who is only the secondary ministerial cause). E confuses efficiency with efficacy. F reads: "so the efficacy of the sacrament is independent...."

E.343, line 44ff: "Subjectively regarded, an actual intention is that disposition of the will which is present before and during the whole action, but such a disposition is not indispensable." Even objectively regarded, an actual

intention may be so defined. F is clear: "From the subjective point of view, the ideal is an actual intention, i.e., that disposition of the will which exists before and during the entire sacramental function; but it is not necessary."

E.346, line 8: ". . . obstacles to grace are lack of faith and unreadiness for penance." It seems clear that E slavishly translates the word 'Unbussfertigkeit which means simply, as F indicates, impenitence.

E.348, line 3ff: "The Old Testament Sacraments wrought, ex opere operate, not grace, but merely an external lawful purity." Lawful means what is permitted; legal, what is according to the prescriptions of the law. F reads legal.

E.354, line Ziff: ", . . . Baptism was administered in such a manner that the person baptizing, in association with the apostolic confession of faith, proposed the threefold question of faith to the person being baptized. . . ." F reads ". . . baptism was conferred under this form: the one baptizing thrice proposed to the one being baptized, conjointly with the recitation of the Apostles' Creed, an interrogation on the faith. . . ."

E.372, line 13ff: ". . . the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) officially proposed the doctrines . . . of the exclusive consecration-power of the validly consecrated priest." F reads: ". . . the exclusive power to consecrate of the validly ordained priest."

E.377, line 40ff: "In association with the words of institution he concurs with the older Church tradition in expressing belief in the Real Presence." F reads: "Resting on the words of institution . . ."

When we examine the English translation from a purely literary viewpoint, we feel no little alarm at the thought of the book falling into the hands of an educated non-Catholic. Looseness of construction and grammatical errors abound. "The formal numeral seven presupposes a well-developed concept of a Sacrament," says the author (E.338, line 26). "Necessity is what cannot not be" (E340, line 3) is hardly English. "Quite apart from the validity of '

the notions," notes E (409, line 19f), when he really means, "Quite apart from the question of the validity." "Multifold" (E.385) and "equiparation" (E.405) are certainly not found in the Concise Oxford Dictionary. We may also note a lack of consistency in the manner in which E designates persons and places, e.g., on page 381 we read St. John Damascene; over the page it becomes St. John of Damascus, and a little further down the same page St. John Damascene appears again.

Let us repeat: the errors and obscurities, we have noted are but a selection of those to be found in ninety pages of the English translation. With regard to the passages mentioned—and those left unmentioned—F is consistently accurate and logical, while E is consistently inaccurate or obscure.

The patient reader of these remarks has, therefore, two choices before him: either the English translation is a faithful reproduction of the original German, and the French translation has corrected the inaccuracies and rendered startlingly clear the obscurities of the original; or the English translation is a grave distortion of the original work of Dr. Ott. Given the first alternative, we wonder why anyone should bother to translate so inaccurate and obscure a work; or why the French translation makes no mention of alterations made to the text.

Our own view is that the English translator has done a grave disservice to Dr. Ott and to the English reading public.

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From: "Br. Alexis Bugnolo"[i] editor@franciscan-archive.org  
To: "John Loughnan" jloughnan@hotmail.com

Subject: Re: Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma - and other files

Date: Thu, 25 Jan 2001 10:18:45 -0500

Dear Mr. Loughnan,

Thank you for this notification.

I was particularly interested in the critique of Fr. Ott's book in English; since I used it for a TV series.

Yes, there are errors, evidently; but these are stuff for corrections in a new edition; none of them are so major as to lead someone who knows theology awry. I am surprised that Fr. Hay does not point out that Fr. Ott opposed the Co-redemption; this is a major fault.

On this point, there are a number of Theological errors in the English edition:

E:211, line 31 "Although Christ is the Sole Mediator between God and Man ..." and again at E 212: 5th line from bottom "sole Mediator" is FALSE, for the Greek in 1 Tim 2:5 is "eis" (cf. The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament, Alfred Marshall, Zondervan, 1958, p. 823) which means "one" in the sense of "first" (cf. Mt. 28:1; Analytical Greek Lexicon, Samuel Bagster Publishers, 1967, London, p. 119) not in the sense of "only" or "sole", which in Greek is "monos" {cf. Mt. 14:23, 18:15, Lk 10:40, Jn 17:3 etc.; Analytical Greek Lexicon, Samuel Bagster Publishers, 1967, London, p. 272)

E 212: penultimate lines: "she could not of herself merit the grace of the redemption of humanity in accordance with the principle: Principium meriti non cadit sub eodem merito) .. " This is erroneous, for on this basis Christ's Immaculate Human nature which was the condition for the Incarnation was itself merited by Christ as The Word upon the Cross. The error consists in not distinguishing that what Christ merited for all, even Himself, is the basis for His title as Redeemer; but that the basis of Mary's title as Corredemptrix is not all, strictly speaking which Christ merited —Mary did not merit what Christ merited for Himself and for Her—but rather all which Christ merited for



humanity, excepting Himself and Her.

E 213: lines 25 ff. Ott attempts to subvert the doctrine of Pope St. Pius X by saying "The statement of Pope Pius X in the Encyclical "Ad diem Ilium" (1904): (Beata Virgo) de congruo, ut aiunt, promeret nobis, quae Christus de condigno promeruit (D 1978 a) (The Blessed Virgin merits for us de congruo what Christ merited de condigno) is, as the present tense "promeret" shows, not indeed to be taken as referring to the historical objective Redemption, which occurred once and for all, but to her every-present, intercessory co-operation in the subjective redemption."

This is FALSE on two points: first "promeret" (She merits) is in the present tense not to refer to the present, but because of the indirect discourse introduced by "ut aiunt" (as they say), which Ott conveniently omits from his translation. Also "promeruit" (He merited" is in the perfect tense on account of the subordination of this clause to that of "promeret", and hence according to Latin grammar signifies the same time for the action, not a prior time, which would take the imperfect tense, cf Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the BVM, Michael O'Carroll, CSSp, Michael Glazier Publ., Wilmington, Delaware, p. 307, which translates "promeruit" with the present tense). Finally, his argument that "She merits" refers to Mary's present meriting for us as intercessory, is illogical, contradictary and absurd, since merit is only possible to wayfares, i.e. those who still live in this world.

Furthermore L. Ott is silent about the teaching of Pope Benedict XV, "Inter Sodalicia", when he writes "so that we may well say that with Christ She redeemed mankind." If co-redemptrix meant only mediate and remote cooperation, one could scarcely say that "She redeemed mankind" in a "well" said manner.

As for Fr. Hay's critique of the use of English ""Necessity is what cannot not be" (E340, line 3) is hardly English"

This is entirely false, in my opinion as a translator of scholastic theology.

You may, if you desire, post my comments on the co-redemption at your site; for the honor of the BVM.

Sincerely in Christ,

Br. Alexis Bugnolo

Jan. 26, 2001

Dear Brother Alexis,

I am most grateful for your message and for the matters raised.

I have no idea whether Fr. Hay was aware of those matters, but he seemed to have been of the opinion that the book contained many more errors. In fact he states: "...the of discrepancies between the translation is so great that we have been obliged to limit our detailed comparison to a mere ninety pages...which cover the Sacraments in general..."

Thus the errors in respect of Our Lady were in a part of the book not covered in his critique.

It is interesting, however, that Dr. Ott himself was wanting in respect of the coredemptrix - an aspect of which I was unaware, and I thank you for bringing it to my attention. I am afraid I am woefully ignorant on so many important matters.

Thank you also for granting permission, "for the honor of the BVM", to post your comments. I will gladly add them.

With kind regards and God bless you,

John