

Catholic Thought

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ABBE BAUTAIN. By WALTER MARSHALL HORTON. New York: The New York University Press. 1926.

Reviewed by ERNEST SUTHERLAND BATES

THE discovery of a new nineteenth century philosopher is something of an achievement; to have discovered him in the bosom of the Catholic Church is perhaps a still greater achievement; for the discovery to have been made by a Protestant professor in Oberlin Theological Seminary assisted in his researches by various European Catholic priests is the greatest achievement of all. Just at the moment when the prospective presidential candidacy of a Roman Catholic threatens to unloose the forces of religious hatred in this unhappy country, Professor Horton comes forward with a book whose inception shows that it is sometimes possible even for Christians to live in harmony. In the world of scholarship, the victory over antiquated prejudice is already won. Catholic and Protestant philosophers no longer hurl maledictions at each other or even regard each other's work with suspicion; instead, the mutual discussion of mutual problems which has so long been needed has now become a fact. This may be called a victory either for philosophy or for religion; possibly for both.

But Professor Horton's book deserves other treatment than merely to be used as a text for a sermon on brotherly love. Its explicit theme, the life and work of Bautain, is developed with such a mastery of historical perspective that Professor Horton may almost be said to have added a chapter to the history of nineteenth century European thought.

Louis-Eugène-Marie Bautain, born at Paris in 1796, was brought up as a Catholic but came under the influence of Victor Cousin at the École Normale and left the church. Immediately upon graduation in 1816, he became professor of philosophy at Strasbourg. Here he lectured brilliantly for three years, expounding the German idealistic metaphysics which he had come to embrace, until suddenly in 1819 he suffered a complete mental break-down. The lesson of human weakness thus impressed upon him at the very moment when he was discoursing proudly of man's kinship with the Absolute eventually brought him back into the Church. His conversion was expedited by acquaintance with Mlle. Louise Humann, a cultured mystic, at that time fifty-four years old, with a wide reputation for piety and learning. But he came back into the Church via Kant and Hegel, feeling that the old Christian apologetic was outworn, and determined to effect a new synthesis between philosophy and Christianity. The result was that the same year which saw his reentrance into the Church saw his suspension from the university by the French government on the ground of irreligion! He continued to teach, however, privately; gathered a group of devoted followers; and through his writings caused "the Strasbourg School" and "the Strasbourg philosophy" to become known throughout the whole of France. Meanwhile he was ordained priest and later was put in control of the Catholic Petit Séminaire in Strasbourg. Here his trenchant attacks upon Scholasticism brought him into conflict with his bishop by whom his doctrines were condemned in 1834. Nothing daunted, he waged a spectacular war with the bishop for six years, though ending as orthodox.

The significance of Bautain lies in the fact that he attempted to turn skepticism to the advantage of Christianity. He held that Kant had demolished the Scholastic proofs of God's existence and that pure reason inevitably leads to pantheism or its twin-sister, skepticism. Hence, like many modern pragmatists, he went over the head of reason to faith, intuition, and conscience. Had his position been accepted by the Church it would have involved a sweeping change in the entire Catholic philosophic program which would have brought the Church nearer the contemporary Protestant position.

The reader will find almost all the voluntaristic and vitalistic arguments of the pragmatist right wing already clearly outlined by Bautain. Professor Horton traces his relations with the Traditionalists in France—De Maistre, Bonnard, and Lamennais—as well as with the German romanticist Catholics; he also demonstrates Bautain's influence upon Modernism. "The Philosophy of the Abbé Bautain" is thus a biography of a most interesting and important figure, a sketch of nineteenth century Catholic thought, and a source-book of contemporary religio-philosophical problems.

Qwertyuiop

A Shirtsleeves History

IV. Continued

WHILE Miss Agnes Repplier, in *The Atlantic Monthly* 1914, was cultivatedly deploring "The Repeal of Reticence"; across the ocean as different an individual as could be imagined, Mr. Wyndham Lewis, hurled at Marinetti and the Futurists a most peculiar periodical known as *Blast*. With this lively assault was connected a somewhat incongruous figure, namely, Mr. Ezra Pound, our famous contemporary American exile. In one of his latest works, "The Revolutionary Simpleton," Mr. Lewis today harks back to that energetic time when Vorticism thus emerged. Pound, says Mr. Lewis, "supplied the Chinese crackers and a trayful of mild jokes," one of which doubtless was his detonating pronouncement, "Marinetti is a corpse." Vorticism was to sweep Futurism into limbo. It bulged with a manifesto signed by Richard Aldington, Gaudier Brzeska (the remarkable sculptor who died in the war), Pound, and Lewis. Ford Madox Ford (then Hueffer), Rebecca West and Epstein contributed to *Blast* but did not sign the manifesto. "The vorticist," said *Blast*, "will use only the primary media of his art. The primary pigment of poetry is the image . . . in painting, Kandinski, Picasso—in poetry H. D.'s

Whirl up sea

Whirl your pointed pines," etc.

That particular poem of H. D.'s (now a classic) is of course one of the few of her poems which are entirely image, where the ocean is invoked as a



EZRA POUND

forest in motion,—an extremely strained idea, were it not handled by an artist in phrase and cadence. The idea that hundreds (perhaps) of vorticists were to start quantity production of hundreds of such presentations of "pure image," was indeed daunting. That should have frightened naughty Mr. Marinetti more than anything else. But that "the primary pigment of poetry is the image" there is no denying. And *Blast's* aim to destroy, in Mr. Lewis's later words, "the 'academic' of the Royal Academy tradition" was worthy in the main. He adds today that this tradition "is now completely defunct."

"The freedom of expression, principally in the graphic and plastic arts, desired by *Blast*, is now attained, and can be indulged in by anybody who has the considerable private means required to be an 'artist,'" continues Lewis. "So its object has been achieved. Though it is only ten or twelve years since that mass of propaganda was launched, in turning over the pages of *Blast* today it is hard to realize the bulk of the traditional resistance that its bulk was invented to overpower. How cowed those forces are today, or how transformed!"

Then he diverges to comment upon Ezra Pound's "antiquarian and romantic tendencies, his velvet-jacket and his blustering trouvère airs" which made him so strange a member of the extremist movement. "What struck them (the extremists) principally about Pound was that his fire-eating propagandist utterances were not accompanied by any

very experimental efforts in his particular medium. His poetry, to the mind of the more fanatical of the group, was a series of pastiches of old french (sic) or old italian poetry, and could lay no claim to participate in the new burst of art in progress. Its novelty consisted largely in the distance it went back, not forward; in archaism, not in new creation."

This criticism and appraisal, it seems to me, remains true of Pound today. But Lewis does not miss his value. It would, in fact, be a strange history of our literary development over here which completely neglected Pound, even though he has for years found his domicile elsewhere. To many of the younger men today Pound remains a significant pioneer, and his generosity and encouragement to a number of disoriented young Americans is widely known. He has now turned to music, under the influence of the dynamic and deafening Antheil. "The Blast situation," comments Wyndham Lewis, "on a meaner scale, repeats itself. Pound is there with a few gentle provençal airs, full of a delicate scholarship and 'sense of the Past,' the organizer of a musical disturbance." Lewis thinks that Pound's effective work is finished, and that it has always savored of an intensely sensitive and specialistic parasitism. This is probably true. But he was the first American since James to take the Continent on its own terms and to enter fully into artistic life abroad. I mean into actual artistic development. If a far lesser writer, he has for a long time remained far more robust in his attitude toward the development of art than did James, who finally lapsed into finicky sterility. Pound may now be *gaga*. In his time he has been a force. Since his true time, at its height in 1914, other young American writers have sought England and the Continent, encouraged by his example.

As I write this, a new magazine, small and scarlet, lies before me. It is *The Exile*, edited by Ezra Pound (No. 1, Spring, 1927). It is the latest Ezra,—and it is nothing new. It begins, of course, with one of his cantos,—that is, "Part of Canto XX." Pound must keep a multi-lingual scrapbook! Guy Hickok, a contributor, then informs us that there is nothing but bad liquor and hypocrisy in the United States. "Mr. Hemingway" then gives us this "Nothoemist Poem,"

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not

want Him for long.

which, Mr. Pound informs us, "refers to events in what remains of the French world of letters."

Mr. John Rodker then fills the rest of the issue, with a rather better contribution, but interminable. Richard Aldington then addresses the editor thus, as one who

Now, in the eighth lustre of his career
When the libidinous itch for publicity
Should long ago have subsided into placid indifference
Madly casts away the only true felicity
For the ignominious servitude
And distracting toil
Of Editorship!
Light fall the blows upon his head—
For he will need all its thickness—
And let us regret the fall of this man
For he once had the courage
To be silent for several years.

And the editor then suggests in a footnote to his "Summary of the Situation," "Apart from Mr. Mencken and the New Masses, American thought is entirely covered by the Harding memorial stamp?" So, after war and revolution, there is still more of this post-war playboying,—but it has lost its freshness—quite—this kind of thing! Turn rather, since we were really entering the era of Armageddon,—turn to Wyndham Lewis's words on what happened then:

In the matter of revolutionary excitement there was indeed not much more to be got out of the plastic or graphic arts. Their purely "revolutionary" value exhausted after the war (which also eclipsed and luckily put an end to Marinetti's bellowings, besides killing off most of the "futurists"), their play-boy's place was taken by real, Red Revolution; just as Marinetti's post-Nietzschean war-doctrine became War, *tout court*; and then Fascismo, which as Futurism in practice, is the habit of mind and conditions of war applied to peace.

But in America, at the outbreak of war we had no Marinetti and no *Blast*. We were certainly not so artistic, in the main, as we were sociological.

The "younger generation" of that day was far more interested in socialistic discussion than in aesthetics, or even than in liquor and dancing. It was a most serious time of youth. Walter Lippmann had followed his "Preface to Politics" with "Drift and Mastery," Jack Reed had put forth "Insurgent Mexico," the old *Masses* flourished brilliantly. The cause of Labor was to the fore. I. W. W. demonstrations vied with the amazing evangelistic campaign of Billy Sunday, "the baseball revivalist." The collapse of King George's Home Rule conference, the progress of the trial of Mme. Caillaux for the murder of Gaston Calmette, the election of Francisco Carbajal as the new provisional President of Mexico, were perhaps important news, but more vital industrial and economic problems engulfed us at home.

And then, suddenly, we all awoke to the true significance of Hapsburgs, Romanoffs and Hohenzollerns. A youth at Sarajevo fired the shot that diminished our immediate world. Before we knew it German cavalry captured Brussels and the Belgians retired to defend Antwerp. The appeal came sharply to us that the rules of war under the Hague treaty had been violated. We were aware of our position as a Powerful Neutral. . . .

But a professional review of the "book situation" informed us that, all commitments having already been accomplished, the "trade" was certainly not likely to suffer that season; and, as it was certain that competitive countries would now be engaged more profoundly in graver affairs than book publishing, the sale of American books might be expected even to "look up" in the future. We were, in fact, clinging for the time to the slogan "business as usual." Oh very much so!

(To be continued in a fortnight)

Turgenev the Incomparable

TURGENEV. THE MAN, HIS ART, AND HIS AGE. By AVRAHM YARMOLINSKY. New York: The Century Co. 1926. \$4.

Reviewed by WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

ALTHOUGH many critical essays on Turgenev have appeared in English, notably one by his friend Henry James, and although Edward Garnett devoted an entire volume to the subject, this is the first work in our language that can truly be called a definitive biography. It is a tall volume of nearly four hundred pages, embellished with illustrations, some of which have never before been printed. The author is a Russian who has written this book in English; that his English is of the United States rather than of Great Britain, is apparent from the participle under the frontispiece. There are a number of other Americanisms; and while the style cannot be called distinguished, it is more dignified than that of many biographies of our day written by native Americans. It is always clear, unpretentious, disarmingly sincere.

The immense value of this book—I regard it as one of the really important books of the twentieth century—lies in the fact that the author went to the Russian sources and knew how to use them; also he has the rather unusual combination of the love of truth with the ability to tell it. I am a Turgenev idolater; and if I had known as much about his life as Mr. Yarmolinsky knows, I should not have been able to exercise such restraint, or to maintain such a judicial poise. For this biography is as objective as the art of its hero.

He nothing extenuates, nor sets down aught in malice. In a time when the art of biography has descended to the art of innuendo, it is pleasant to read a writer who prefers facts to sensation. He has selected his material as one selects truth from falsehood, never for the purpose of scoring off his victim, or for theatrical distortion.

The author has studiously abstained from literary criticism and from appraisal; this is a biography, not an essay in criticism. But I hope that his next book will be a critical estimate of the position of Turgenev in the history of the novel, in the history of Russian literature, with a literary analysis of the separate works.

Naturally he does not think it necessary to rhapsodize on the qualities of Turgenev's art. The fact that he travelled to the other side of the world, and spent years of research in various libraries for material, is a sufficient commentary on his opinion of Turgenev's importance. Yet it is a little surprising that he can remain so aloof from his man, and report the story of his life in a detachment so complete, in

a manner almost as cold as the library where he worked. Let me say then that his pitiless research has not lessened my admiration for Turgenev's character and personality: nothing could lessen my adoration of his art.

It is perhaps a natural contradiction in the eternal inconsistency of human nature, that Tolstoy, so passionate a Christian and the author of parables so beautiful that there has hardly been anything equal to them since the New Testament, Tolstoy, whose writings have aided in the evangelization of the world, should himself have been so disagreeable, so jealous, so incapable of admiration, so harshly intolerant; and that Turgenev, an absolute sceptic in religion, should have shown the fruits of the spirit in gentleness, loving-kindness, modesty, purity, with a certain royal graciousness, as unpretentious as it was aristocratic. No writer was ever more agreeable than Turgenev; few have shown themselves more disagreeable than Tolstoy. It was primarily, no doubt, a fundamental difference in temperament; but in this particular instance the worship of beauty produced more attractive manners than the worship of God.

It was the sight of a duel between an adder and a toad that destroyed Turgenev's religious faith; it is the sufferings of animals, according to Bishop Gore, that form the greatest obstacles to a belief in the love of God. Turgenev might have pushed the inquiry a step further; whence came his rage and despair at the spectacle? Why could he not view it with indifference?

The early chapters of the book deal with those two amazing persons, Turgenev's father and mother; he was unfortunate certainly in having such a mother; and although his attitude to woman was chivalrous and reverential—Victorian, if you like to call it that—he never gave us a mother who was both good and clever. The best mother in all his books is that marvellous peasant mother of Bazarof—nothing short of genius could have made such a portrait.

Mr. Yarmolinsky seems to believe that Turgenev was afflicted with a "flabbiness of will." But this characteristic, at least when compared with the Anglo-Saxon temperament, is more characteristic of the Slav in general than of Turgenev in particular. On this point, the testimony is universal. Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Sienkiewicz, Gorky, to name five very different men, testify to the same thing. The "typical" Russian man lacks will-power, perseverance, ability to bring things to pass; he is not "practical"; the women have he backbone. Rudin is the Slav label.

(If a frivolous word may be inserted in the review of so important a work, I counsel Yale men to turn to page 32, where they will find the youthful Turgenev giving the Yale football cheer!)

Turgenev's relations with student friends, and with the great critics, Belinsky and Herzen, are described in chapters of peculiar interest and value. Although an idealizer of women, and a master of the art of writing "love scenes," Turgenev was essentially a man's man, as became one whose chief recreation was shooting. In his student days, in the course of travel, and in the literary circles of Paris, he especially loved to be with men—his friendship with Flaubert is one of the notable friendships in history.

Which does not at all affect the chief intimacy of his life—his relations with Pauline Viardot. Every discoverable illumination is shed on this extraordinary friendship, which it is just possible was the only Platonic love on record. I am certain that I read somewhere—and it galls me to think I cannot find the reference in my notes, though I have diligently searched—that Turgenev gave Pauline Viardot the manuscript of a complete novel, with instructions that it was to be published ten years after her death, presumably because filled with recognizable portraits. He died in 1883, and actuarially speaking, she ought to have died about 1895. But the amazing woman lived till 1910. So sure was I of what I had read, that in 1920 I fully expected to see a new and full-length novel by Turgenev—what a thing to happen, and I had awaited it with eager expectation. Where is it?

Turgenev's plays, as it natural enough, are hardly more than mentioned; but I can supplement Mr. Yarmolinsky's comment with three additional facts. He says, "His most ambitious piece, 'A Month in the Country,' first entitled 'The Student,' was revived by the Moscow Art Theatre for the generation that applauded Chekhov." 1. Turgenev's plays, in one

volume, have been recently translated into English by Doctor Max S. Mandell. 2. Mandell's translation of "A Month in the Country" was produced in London during the summer of 1926. 3. It has been accepted by the New York Theatre Guild; it will be produced next season, or shortly thereafter.

Those who are now excited over the eternal question of "the younger generation," should read the greatest novel ever written on this theme—"Fathers and Children"—and see what happened to Turgenev, because he chose to produce a work of art rather than write propaganda.

One of the reasons why Turgenev's expositions never satisfied anybody was because he was—exactly the opposite of H. G. Wells—always an artist and never a controversialist. One remark he made (cited by Mr. Yarmolinsky) is significant: "It always seems to me that exactly the opposite of what I say could be asserted with equal justice." There speaks the born artist and literary critic—imagine such a remark being made by Theodore Roosevelt or Woodrow Wilson!

Turgenev loved life, loved human nature, loved beauty; he disliked "views" of all kinds, and was bored by extremists. In answer to a lady who wrote him for information he said:

I shall say briefly that I am, above all, a realist, and chiefly interested in the living truth of the human face; to everything supernatural I am indifferent, and I don't believe in absolutes and systems; I love freedom better than anything, and so far as I can judge I am sensitive to poetry. Everything human is dear to me, Slavophilism is alien, and so is all manner of orthodoxy.

No wonder such a man was hated by Herzen and the radicals, by the Orthodox nationalist Dostoevsky, and viewed with suspicion by the Czar. No wonder he was misunderstood by his French friends. But as it requires a certain amount of courage to be a root-and-branch man in politics, and a certain amount of courage to be a Fundamentalist in religion, so I think it also requires courage to proclaim only the truth as one sees it, and to keep one's head clear while the air is full of slogans.

Mr. Yarmolinsky has performed a permanent and invaluable service in writing an objective biography of a great objective novelist; his book is worth more than one careful reading, and there are chapters I shall reread many times.

Paul the Apostle

BROTHER SAUL. By DONN BYRNE. New York: The Century Co. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

I WONDER what Donn Byrne was thinking about when he wrote this book! The publishers suggest "Ben Hur." The scene, the color, something of the style are the same, with Saul (Paul) instead of Christ at the heart of the story. But whereas Lew Wallace used Jesus and His times as a mere background, so to speak, against which to present a melodrama of his own invention, Donn Byrne is concerned primarily with the personal career of Saul of Tarsus, and thus deliberately sacrifices fiction to biography. "Ben Hur" was not the greatest historical novel ever written, but it told a thrilling tale with swiftness, passion, and cumulative interest. Its triple success as book, play, and movie shows with what skill its author appealed to the popular imagination. Never was Sunday school material so perfectly wrought into the substance of a "best-seller." But Donn Byrne, though he had the model before him, has not duplicated the feat. This book has no plot, no pattern of incident and character; it is a mere succession of scenes borrowed faithfully from the New Testament, reproduced with infinite labor over a wealth of imaginative detail, but containing not a hundredth part of the interest, say, of the "Book of Acts." We tired of the thing before we had turned the fiftieth of the nearly five hundred crowded pages.

I think it more likely that Donn Byrne had in mind Papini and his "Life of Christ." That amazing book was seriously described by its publishers as a biography, and it fooled the people as completely as any one of Barnum's old tricks. Of course there was not a vestige of serious biography in it. It was simply and solely a romantic re-rendering of the gospel story, with Papini's turgid and inexhaustible rhetoric substituted for the simple and august chronicles of the evangelists. Donn Byrne, with ten times the honesty of Papini but scarcely a tithe of his gorgeous buncombe, has obviously tried to do with Paul what the Italian