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“De Imitatione Christi.”

A Review of “The Imitation of Christ,” by Thomas à Kempis,* with an Historical Introduction on Scholasticism, Mysticism, and the Brethren of the Common Life.

JOHN H. C. FRITZ, St. Louis, Mo.

Of the book *The Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis, Kurtz, the church historian, says: “With the exception of the Bible perhaps no other work has so frequently been reprinted or translated into so many languages, nor has any other been perused by so many persons of all ranks and creeds.” Up to the year 1900 three thousand editions had been printed. The printing of a new edition a few months ago by the Macmillan Company — this edition bearing the *nihil obstat* and the *imprimatur* of Roman Catholic censorship — has given the incentive to this article. It seems strange that a religious book having the approval of the Roman Catholic Church has been widely circulated among, and studiously read also by, a large number of Protestants.

Thomas à Kempis was a member of the Brethren of the Common Life. As soon as we know the relation of this order to Mysticism and the relation of Mysticism to Scholasticism, we shall know the reason why Thomas à Kempis wrote his book *De Imitatione Christi* and shall understand the religious element in it which has merited the approval of the Roman Catholic Church and which also, from a somewhat different viewpoint, has appealed to a large number of Protestants. A few introductory historical notes will therefore help us in our judgment.

Scholasticism was an attempt made during the Middle Ages, from Anselm to Aquinas, to rationalize Christianity or, in other words, to justify the existing church doctrines by reason, especially by the reasoning process of Aristotelian philosophy. The method

* *The Imitation of Christ*. By Thomas à Kempis. Edited with introduction and notes by Brother Leo, F. C. S., Professor of English Literature in St. Mary's College, Oakland, Cal. 353 pages. \$1.00. (The Macmillan Company, New York, N. Y.)

THE THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER.

The message of the new Governor of Colorado, which calls upon the Legislature to pass an amendment to the prohibition enforcement laws of the State forbidding the use of wine for sacramental purposes, is an ominous utterance, indicating to what extreme fanatical prohibitionists are determined to go. If this law is passed, the religion of thousands of citizens of Colorado is put out of commission in at least one point, and that a very important one. For wine is the sacramental element appointed for the Eucharist, and no one has a right to substitute any other for it.

DAU.

His impressions of the Foreign Missions Convention of the United States and Canada at Washington, January 28 to February 2, the editor of the *Presbyterian* sums up thus: "The purpose and plan of the convention is most excellent, and its results are most hopeful, but for one embarrassment. There are two antagonistic parties involved in it, which differ fundamentally as to the message and the object of missions. One of these parties holds the exclusive objects of missions to be salvation of souls, and the only method or instrumentality is the Gospel, as provided by the supernatural life and work of Jesus Christ. There are sequences of improved social or civil life, but these are results, not purposes. The other party makes social reconstruction and civilization the chief purpose and is either indifferent to, or negligent of, the object of soul salvation, with the consequence that the emphasis is put upon education in the human power and the use of all departments of art and science for the best earthly development of mankind. Until a closer agreement can be reached, all such conventions and efforts at cooperation and inspiration must be more or less embarrassed." For this reason much of the fine enthusiasm displayed by the 3,480 delegates to the convention and the 8,000 to 10,000 attendants at its sessions will prove a waste of time and energy, and the exhibits of the marvelous achievements of missionaries in all parts of the world are deceptive. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Amos 3, 3. The social emphasis in foreign mission work, moreover, is undesirable, not only from the Christian viewpoint, but also for political reasons. It is the herald of social uplift in the foreign mission field that has filled the rulers of pagan lands with the suspicion that these uplifters are political agents in religious disguise and propagandists for the imperialism of the great World Powers.

DAU.

A World Lutheran Missionary Convention?—A Philadelphia seminarian, writing in the *Lutheran* (February 19), "was impressed [at the World Missionary Convention] with the great and many things that Protestant denominations have in common in comparison with the things in which they differ. The Lutheran delegates in common felt the lack of unity as a denomination, let alone the characteristic aloofness of our Church in interdenominational activity. A suggestion was made at the Lutheran delegates' meeting that the Lutheran Church have a World Lutheran Missionary Convention, which was well received. Great things will come out of the Washington convention. If we cannot contribute to so great an affair, let us at least attribute what others have given us." Now, what might that be?—A World Lutheran Missionary Convention would labor under the same difficulties as the one that met at Washington and could never hope to achieve the *éclat* of the latter. But who cares for that? If a really united Lutheran Church were to take up in a Pan-Lutheran Convention the discussion of the needs of the heathen and the evangelical way to meet them, that would indeed be a great and glad event.

DAU.

Freemasonry views itself as a kind of superreligion. Rudyard Kipling is reported thus in the *Scottish Rite Clip Service*, February 15: "I was secretary for some years of Lodge Hope and Perseverance No. 782 E. (Lahore English constitution), which included brethren of at least four creeds. I was entered by a member of Brahma Somaj, a Hindu, passed by a Mohammedan, and raised by an Englishman. Our tiler was an Indian Jew. We met, of course, on the level, and the only difference any one would notice was that at our banquets some brethren, who were debarred by caste rules from eating food not ceremonially prepared, sat over empty plates." In Dr. Joseph Fort Newton's diary, now being published in the *Master Mason*, there is a record of a Masonic lodge-meeting attended by Hindus, Buddhists, Mohammedans, Parsees, Hebrews, Christians, Catholics, and various kinds of Protestants. At the close of the meeting a brother of each religion pronounced a word of blessing from the ritual of his own belief, and all the brethren united in the Lord's Prayer. Dr. Newton remarks: "About no altar on earth could such a group be gathered in mutual regard and good will. For three hours we talked in many tongues, in voices soft and sometimes tremulous, of the reality which underlies all races and all faiths, the basis of all and the blessing of each. Exclusiveness was excluded; we found that which makes us eternally one with one another." Evidently the caste people at Kipling's banquets still had a conscience about some things which they would not sacrifice. Caste is everything to the Hindu. They professed their religion by not eating. The other religionists, it seems, had nothing to confess. At Dr. Newton's meeting all beliefs were merged in the Lord's Prayer, but that did not mean that all suddenly became Christians, for even the Lord's Prayer was but one of many expressions of "the reality underlying all faiths," that nondescript something which wipes out all religious distinctions. This "underlying reality" must take in

Satan, according to Jas. 2, 19 and other evidences which Scripture gives of the extent of his religiousness. But James says that it is a reality that makes the devils tremble. There will be a rude awakening for all who think that they have the great, the real, the universal religion when they have the Masonic religion which is the essence of all and above all; for they will, on the basis of the "underlying reality," some day greet their Brother Belial. DAU.

On the Klan School Law in Oregon the editor of the *San José* (Cal.) *Evening News* (February 4) expresses the following views, which characterize the average thinking of the secular mind on this subject:—

"Governor Pierce of Oregon has filed in the Supreme Court of his State a brief defending the Oregon compulsory education law requiring all children between the ages of eight and sixteen to attend public school. A Catholic school and a private military school had secured an injunction restraining the State from enforcing this law, and Governor Pierce's brief is an effort to have this injunction set aside. The governor declares that, unless Oregon has the power to enforce the law 'it is hard to assign any limits to the injurious effect, from the standpoint of American patriotism.' He then advances some of the familiar Klan arguments: that, 'unless States have such rights, children may be taught that their true allegiance is to some other country than the United States; that the claims upon them of the religion to which they belong are superior to the claims of the United States,' and so on down the usual list. The Oregon law, in our opinion, is part of an effort to have Americanism made the official state religion of the people of this country and consequently violates the fundamental rule of the separation of Church and State. What good does it do to guarantee 'religious freedom' to people and at the same time to insist that they shall accept extreme Americanism, with its basic ritual of flag-saluting, as their official religion? Wherein does this differ from the ancient rule in the Old World that people should accept Catholicism, with its basic ritual of the Mass, as their official religion? The reason any Americans make such an attempt to violate religious liberty is because they as yet fail to realize that Americanism is actually a religion in the extreme form in which it is now being urged. There are many senses in which Catholics or Jews or Protestants have a perfect right to insist that 'the claims upon them of the religion to which they belong are superior to the claims of the United States.' Surely it is a far greater thing to be one of the children of the Most High than it is to be one of the citizens of the United States. If Governor Pierce denies this, if he insists that it is treason to contend this, then he must come right out with the admission that extreme Americanism is our official religion, that Church and State are *not* separated in this country, but are one and indivisible. But as a matter of fact, the real rub in this whole question is the Catholic religion, not any of the others. The dominant Protestant element in this country is on the rampage and is trying to persecute the Catholics. It does no good to argue that the Catholics would do the same if theirs were the dominant religion,

or that the Catholics in the past have persecuted Protestants; for just now it is the Protestants who are on top and who are trying to gouge the Catholics. The Catholics have a perfect right to maintain their parochial schools. It is wrong of the Protestants to endeavor to compound an official religion out of Protestantism and extreme jingoism and slip it over the Catholics in the public schools, pretending the while that the principles of religious liberty are not being violated. A faction of the Protestants has shown the same blind zeal in its agitation for Sunday legislation, overlooking the fact that Sunday legislation distinctly violates religious liberty. Catholics do not have the same attitude toward Sunday observance that Protestants have; Jews do not observe the same Sabbath; Adventists do not. Consequently, any Sunday legislation proceeding on the assumption that Sunday is a day that must inevitably be observed in certain ways is distinctly sectarian legislation, violating religious liberty. Advocates of compulsory non-Catholic education of the sort the Oregon law provides for are simple souls who do not understand that divided loyalties are inevitable. They are not only inevitable, but they are wholesome. Of course, patriotism and religion conflict at times; and it is well that they should. When a man who loves and reveres his mother gets married, he very soon finds that his loyalty to his wife and his loyalty to his mother occasionally come in conflict. His mother wishes him to do certain things, and his wife wishes him to do the opposite. It is a poor stick of a man indeed who thinks that he must immediately divorce his wife or quit being friendly with his mother because of such circumstances. If he is a man at all sensible or subtle, he will soon realize that such divided loyalties are an inevitable and a highly educative part of life's experience, and his soul will grow greater because of such inward conflicts. Now, there are fanatics who would have the soul owe no loyalty whatever save to the soul's mother, the Church; there are also fanatics who would have the soul owe no allegiance save to the soul's wife, America. It is the latter group of fanatics who are striving to put over legislation such as the Oregon law. They want life to be simple, crude, with one unreasoning ignorant loyalty in absolute possession of the soul, uneducated by conflict with other loyalties. This is not the direction in which a subtler and nobler civilization lies. We believe that the majority of Protestants in America are opposed to this narrow sectarian Americanism, and that they will, in the long run, defeat this tendency."

The editor's remarks about divided loyalty are not adequate. Men who have adopted the principle of separation of Church and State do not *divide*, but *separate*, their loyalty to either authority. In either case, however, their loyalty is whole-hearted. The lines of separation sometimes may be a little difficult to draw exactly, but when drawn, there is no trouble about when I must, or must not, obey either the Church or the State. "Divided loyalty" would be the proper case where a subject swears allegiance and promises submission *in the same matter* first to one and then to another power foreign to the first. This danger exists in Roman Catholicism. DAU.

The Philadelphia Seminary of the United Lutheran Church has an enrolment, at present, of 110 theological students. The *Seminary Bulletin* of December, 1924, reports the fact that the president of the seminary, the Rev. Dr. Henry E. Jacobs, celebrated his eightieth birthday on November 7, 1924. Dr. Jacobs is the editor of the Jacobs edition (English) of the *Book of Concord*. The same *Bulletin* also reports the sudden death of the Rev. Dr. Albert T. W. Steinhäuser on November 1, 1924. Dr. Steinhäuser was one of the joint editors of the Philadelphia edition of *Luther's Works* translated into English and was the translator of Prof. M. Reu's *Homiletics*. FRITZ.

The financial drive to raise \$15,000,000 for the completion of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine on Morningside Heights from all who live in New York, irrespective of their religious attitude, was justified by Bishop Manning on the ground that the cathedral would be "a house of prayer and worship for all the people of the city. All the strong currents of civic life flow into it and receive spiritual interpretation. It is the People's Church, the Strangers' Church, the City's Church." The drive has produced a number of surprises: 1. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., sent his check for half a million and expressed the hope that trustees of other Protestant denominations might help control the "People's Church." This suggestion was reasonable and fair, only it should not have limited the control of the cathedral to Protestants; for the Catholics Mayor Hylan, Governor Smith, and Charles Schwab, and the Jew Mortimer Schwab also contributed. Promptly the financially broad-minded Bishop Manning replied to Mr. Rockefeller that the time had not yet arrived for carrying out his suggestion. And now *Current Opinion* (March) says: "It is unfortunate that in his zeal to complete the great edifice on Morningside Heights Bishop Manning has laid his denomination open to a charge of unseemly presumption, if not even equivocation, in claiming for it a catholicity which, whatever its theological validity [*non est!*], does not square with the actual facts." 2. The same magazine questions the propriety of turning the management of the financial campaign over to a firm of professional money-raisers. "Whether a Church professing a spiritual ideal does not lose more than it gains by placing itself, so to speak, in the hands of money-changers, is at least an arguable question. The business man's first thought is to push the fund to the goal, and a Church should be too jealous of its honor to allow financial expediency the right of way." 3. The Catholic *America* "declares that aid given to the Cathedral is spiritually as mischievous as would be the physical ravages ensuing from the propagation of disease germs," for the Episcopalian doctrines are heretical. This last exception, as reported in *Current Opinion*, is the most surprising; for the correct thought underlying it is not lived up to by Catholics, who enlist the general public not only for support of their charitable enterprises, on the plea that they are working for the general welfare, but also for their churches, for instance, by great street-fairs with their questionable money-raising devices. Protestants should remember the *America's* plea the next time the Sisters from such-and-such Home, etc., call.

Business men, in particular, employees of the government, who are periodically levied upon by representatives of the Catholic Church, should have the moral courage to say that it is against their religious convictions to aid a heretical body. *Current Opinion* has succeeded in exposing the disingenuousness of the Episcopalians, but appears not to sense inconsistency in the *America's* plea. The latter paper does not come into court with clean hands.

DAU.

Dr. Eliot's List of Famous Men. — Recently Dr. Charles W. Eliot of Harvard University named ten men "who in his opinion have rendered the greatest service to education in the last two hundred years" and also the corresponding ten for the "two thousand three hundred years since the beginning of history." The first group comprises Adam Smith, Michael Faraday, John Stuart Mill, William Ellery Channing, Horace Mann, Herbert Spencer, Ernest Renan, Charles Robert Darwin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Louis Pasteur; the second group, Aristotle, Galen, Leonardo da Vinci, Milton, Shakespeare, John Locke, Emmanuel Kant, Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. In a letter addressed to *America* (February 28), the official organ of the Jesuits in the United States, a subscriber suggests that "Dr. Eliot's list should be corrected by competent scholars." He writes: "This is a startling revelation of the narrow and partisan outlook of the renowned president emeritus of Harvard. The Americans in his list are Ralph Waldo Emerson, who did more than any one else to rob the Puritans of their faith and substituted for it nothing but some beautiful phrases; William Ellery Channing, a weak prototype of Emerson; and Horace Mann, whose chief effort was to Prussianize the American school system. The foreign names also include several of inferior rank. It is discouraging that our American universities accept as their spokesman so biased a thinker."

With this opinion the reviewer finds himself in full accord; only he would probably select ten different men than the Catholic subscriber has in mind. In naming ten of the greatest educators of the last two hundred years, a Jesuit would no doubt be as biased and narrow as Dr. Eliot.

MUELLER.

The number of drug addicts in the United States is estimated at 1,000,000, by the Commissioner of Correction for New York City, Frederic A. Wallis. While the per capita consumption is one grain in Italy, two in Germany, three in England, four in France, it is thirty-six grains in the United States, surpassing even India with a consumption of twenty-seven grains per capita. It has increased five grains per capita since 1914 spite of the Harrison Narcotic Act. The most popular opiate is heroin, five ounces of which are calculated to produce 10,000 addicts in a few days. Boys between the ages of twelve and fifteen are taught the use of narcotic drugs. Addicts pay from \$10 to \$30 a day to satisfy their craving. This is a horrid chapter in present-day social ethics in our country, and the worst feature of it is its rapid spread. (See *Current History*, February.)

DAU.

Pera Johannes, Lutheran missionary to the Kurds in Persia, died September 3, 1924, aged seventy-three years, at the home of his son in Alsace. He had suffered much during the recent persecutions in Persia. Pastor H. Stallmann mentions that he was well known in the congregations of the Saxon Free Church in Hannover, and that Rev. K. Roebelen, of Hermannsburg, who reports his demise, speaks of Johannes as of "a faithful man, who clung with his whole heart to the Lutheran Church and regarded it as his life-task to transmit the blessing of Luther's Reformation to his native country," especially to the Old Syrian Church of Persia.

DAU.

Referring to the orgy of repressive measures in which his party is indulging, Mussolini, on January 3, said in the Italian Parliament: "I declare before this Chamber, before the world, and before God that I personally assume the whole political, moral, and historical responsibility for what has occurred. I declare that if the Fascisti are an association of malefactors, then I am the head of that association of malefactors. . . . Let them [the Opposition] remember that if I had employed in inflaming Fascism a hundredth part of the energy I have employed in restraining it, then indeed there would not be one single enemy of Fascism from one end of Italy to the other." *Popolo d' Italia* remarked after this deliverance: "January 3 will be a memorable date in the history of Italian civilization. Italy, Europe, and the world now know that Fascism has become the government in order to personify the whole nation. Oppositions are a thing of the past." Always bear in mind that Mussolini is a friend of the Pope.

DAU.

Glimpses from the Observer's Window. — That atheism is not encouraged at the great schools of America is the conviction of Dr. Fosdick, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *Scottish Rite Clip Service*. "Students no longer take unquestioningly what their elders have handed down to them, . . . but they are religious in the best sense of the term." All of which means just as much as you choose to take out of it. The authorities quoted are not very reassuring.

Regarding the football team of Notre Dame University, Father John F. O'Hara says: "In all the football trips this fall arrangements were made in advance for Holy Communion on every day of the trip. . . . The boys never missed." The "fifteen" of the Benedictine Abbey of Downside in England have an equally fine religious record. *The Commonweal* is filled with edification and reverence by this record. It regards it as a sign of great promise for the future of Catholicism. The sporting world should take notice that when a Catholic team plays, Catholicism plays.

The complete break of Argentina with the Vatican was prevented by the Bishop of Santa Fe's submitting for the Government's approval the documents by which the Pope had appointed him Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires. This right of approval was conceded to the Government of Argentina in return for having made Roman Catholicism the state religion under the Argentine Constitution.

Dr. Antonio Eitel, Dr. Karl Glochner, and Dr. A. Decker have been invited by the Colombian government to modernize the educational system of the republic.

At a secret consistory on December 18, 1924, the Pope, upon the return of the Pontifical Relief Mission from Russia, denounced the Moscow government and the principles of Bolshevism in unusually strong terms. He called on all heads of governments to unite to avert the grave dangers of Socialism and Communism. Time will show what this call means.

Referring to the Sterling-Reed Bill for Federal Control of Education, now pending in Congress, the Catholic *Commonwealth* (January 28), after showing the waste of money which this bill invites, remarks: "It is tyrannical to declare that no State may permit the operation of a foreign-language school within its borders. One may well suspect ulterior purposes, elsewhere plainly manifest, in this bill, which, far from aiding education, would destroy, not education only, but the liberties of the people." The writer is worried particularly about French being debarred from the curricula of private schools and says nothing about Polish, Italian, and German. Of course, the bill before Congress is tyrannical, but there are better ways of proving that than by pointing to the elimination of French, which is a negligible quantity in our ordinary private schools.

Genealogical research connects George Washington with a Scandinavian ancestry, by way of the family of Wass, which emigrated from Denmark in 970 and built the town of Wassingatun in the county of Durham, England. Washington himself claimed this descent in remarks which he made at a meeting of the Societas Scandinaviensis at Philadelphia, December 11, 1782.

The churches of Minnesota are asked to support House Bill No. 418, which aims at closing the movies, etc., on Sunday. This will not gain better attendance at evening services in Minnesota, but it will look to the masses as a piece of spite work on the part of the preachers who resent the fact that people rather go to see a show than listen to them.

The sixth Philippine Legislature failed to pass the law providing for compulsory religious education in the Philippine Islands.

The merging of the U. L. C. congregations in Virginia, which was begun in 1921, was reported completed at the recent convention at Staunton. The process affected the Southwest Virginia Synod, the Synod of Virginia, the Holston Synod, and the Virginia Conference of the Tennessee Synod.

Caroline Atwater Mason's story *The Highway* is being ridiculed by champions of Higher Criticism for its ignorance of the work of modern Biblical inquiry. Do you remember having heard some one say to you: "Ah, but you do not understand me"?

The wrangle of the World Powers at Geneva over the control of opium consumption has ended in a moral breakdown. Viscount Cecil charged the United States, on the basis of statistics, with being the largest consumer of opium and then apologized. The U. S. Representative Porter also had to listen to insinuations that his country ought first to enforce its law for the prohibition of liquor before it start any further prohibition.

While Hans Luther, the new Chancellor of the German Empire, was addressing the Reichstag, an interrupter cried to him, "Little monk, thou art started on a rough journey." *Current Opinion* (March) remarks: "It was the famous remark addressed to Martin Luther when he set forth to face the Diet of Worms. But after all, Martin Luther—however rough the journey—somehow persisted to the end. It is not a bad augury for Hans." The task of German parliamentarians working for the uplift of the *Reich* is to break the power of the Center, or Catholic Party.

In his book *Straws and Prayer-books* John Branch Cabell, the romantic artist who is bored to death with this present misfit world, holds up to the Creator a better world à la Cabell, as a sample of what the Creator might have done if He had the wit. (See review by Llewellyn Jones in the *Literary Review of the Chicago Evening Post*.) Yes, we are passing slowly into the concluding darkness.

The Soviet Living Church of Russia is reported dead by Donald Day in the *Chicago Tribune*. It was founded two years ago by Communists with the aid of the Methodist Rev. L. O. Hartmann, editor of the *Zion Herald* of Boston. Bishops Blake and Nuelsen of the Methodist Church of America were induced by Hartmann to promise \$50,000 for the support

of the Living Church, \$40,000 of which was collected in America. The Soviet government dispossessed the Orthodox Russian Church of one building after the other, but the people refused to attend the Living (Methodist) Church.

“Adultery remains, potentially at least, the most absorbing of dramatic themes because no other concrete act which a human being can perform awakens so many and such varied emotional reverberations,” says Joseph Wood Krutch, dramatic critic of the *Nation* (February, 1925), in a review of the latest plays put on the New York stage. Remember this: Adultery and the modern stage are indissoluble.

Holy Year, according to the *Commonweal* (February 11), has begun with a scarcity of pilgrims; but the hope is expressed that “there will be no shortage by the end of the year.”

DAU.
