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New Challenge to an Old Problem: Elements of Composition

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of some great cardinals who never became popes. Thus neither in the text nor in the index are the names of Baronius or Bellarmine mentioned, although they were among the most learned of the cardinals. Consalvi, the great diplomat of the Napoleonic period, is also completely ignored. In outlining the life of Pius XII, mention is made of his contribution to the codification of Canon Law but not a word is said of Cardinal Gasparri, the outstanding man who shouldered the entire burden of this momentous task and saw it to completion.

General statements made without adequate background could lead to certain false impressions. It is not correct to imply that all or even most papal legates in the early church were cardinals. In the fourth century, the lines of demarcation between cardinals, bishops and priests were hardly clear. While no one would gainsay the impact of the Cluniac reform, Benedictine historians will be suprised to learn that it was Cluny and not Subiaco or Montecassino which was the motherhouse of their order.

As befits a popular writer, the style of the author is for the most part vivid and readable. Occasionally an incomplete sentence appears to mar the perfection of the writing. Despite these strictures, the book is both interesting and informative. Above all, the thoughtful reader will close its covers with two conclusions firmly planted in his mind. The Catholic Church, as revealed in its highest authorities, is deeply human. On the other hand, her survival and vitality in the midst of and despite this very humanity, more eloquently than any other testimony, gives evidence that she is sustained by a power that can only be divine.

SAMUEL R. WILEY

NEW CHALLENGE TO AN OLD PROBLEM

ELEMENTS OF COMPOSITION. By Robert Hamilton Moore.
New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1960. xiii, 224pp.

The apparently insurmountable problem in teaching writing has always been that students need to write ten times more than their overburdened teachers can evaluate and correct. Devices for inspiring cajoling or bullying the young writer to write have always been few and of limited effectiveness, for even if he did accede to writing on his own such a course is fraught with the danger of making writing faults an indelible habit.

Elements of Composition, although not a panacea for writing ills, should at least be considered a modern approach to the problem, and a more than cursory glance should win the reader to the author's conviction that it "can and should be more than just another conventional workbook... Standard workbooks have tried too long to substitute the mechanical completion of exercise sentences for the thinking that must underlie original composition. Standard workbooks have often substituted ease of grading for the most efficient teaching, and as a result we have produced students who can readily correct workbook sentences but still cannot write acceptable sentences, paragraphs or papers of their own."

An examination of the text indicates a positive approach to attack this problem. Even in the first chapter, which is devoted to grammar, exercises in synthesis are preferred to exercises in analysis. No presumption is made that the skills of analysis, knowledge of classification and command of grammatical rules can, by the application of logic, be turned into composition skills. The review of grammar is stripped down to its minimum essentials. In its presentation the author anticipates the student's question, "Why study this stuff?" by disarmingly frank statements of which the following is a good example: "Let's start with the hardest part, the part that seemed to be least useful—grammar. Grammar is not a mere list of technical terms to be memorized or a set of concepts to be manipulated for their own sakes, although it is sometimes taught as if it were. The grammar of a language, instead, is an attempt to describe the way a particular language works: an attempt to classify the elements which educated users of the language employ to say things to each other, to find the patterns they assign to those elements, and to explain how they use them. Most of those patterns you already know. What we need to do in this course is to identify the few places in which your habits do not agree with the habits of educated speakers and writers and learn to replace bad habits with good ones."

Accordingly the author gives short shrift to non-essentials: "There are many special tense and mood combinations, but the native speaker of English has no trouble with them. He can readily add together a present tense, present participle, infinitive, prepositional adverb, and present participle, and come up with so complicated a tense-mood form as '*I am going to go on working* all next week.' We needn't worry about such phrases; they come to us naturally." Likewise an elaborate presentation of the present tense is avoided since the author recognizes the commonly ignored fact that "we rarely use the simple present, *I run*. *I am running*, called the progressive present, and *I do run* called the emphatic present is much more common."

Early in the text, with the introduction of clauses, paragraph development is stressed. In fact, paragraph development seems to be the keystone of the course, justified as an end in itself by many ingenious devices and as a means to an end by its final use in the longer paper.

Such emphasis on the paragraph would indicate the place of the book as a first-year college text, with or without reading supplements, or as a remedial-English aid on any college level. Some teachers might object to this book because of insufficient models or examples, but second thoughts might reveal that frequently a copious supply of examples serves only to confuse rather than clarify. It might seem that a few well chosen examples with clear directions on how to apply them are preferable to many rich examples which have, at least in the mind of the student, only a vague relationship to the problem at hand.

Far too many composition books are offered which are lush and varied in their delineations, refinements, and detailed suggestions for writing, but the clear-cut guide that simplifies the writing process by confining the tools of learning to a functional minimum is rare indeed.

The sensible approach to grammar, the aptness of the examples, the relevance of the exercises to problems, the insight into the needs of the student, and the relative ease of scoring make *Elements of Composition* an offering worthy of examination, and the author's purpose, "to force the student to write as early and often as possible" and enable them to "write while they learn and learn by writing" has a good chance of fulfillment.

HUGH STEWART

CAN BELIEVERS BE PHILOSOPHERS?

CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY AND INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM.

By Anton Pegis, F.R.S.C. The Gabriel Richard Lecture. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1960. 89 pp.

People familiar with the development of education in the Philippines are aware of the influence of the University of Michigan here. They may be less aware of the fact that the University of Michigan was founded by two Roman Catholic priests, one of whom, Fr. Gabriel Richard, was also a member of the House of Representatives at Washington. The Gabriel Richard Lecture series has been established