

## NOTES

### CONDITIONALLY REBAPTIZED CONVERTS AND INTEGRAL CONFESSION

Is the adult convert from Protestantism who is received into the Church with conditional baptism obliged to make an integral confession of the mortal sins he has certainly committed since his first baptism? Recently I have had occasion to make a rather thorough study of this question. I found that, though the universality of the obligation is strenuously debated, there is a practically unanimous opinion of moralists that integral confession is obligatory in those places where the ecclesiastical authorities insist on it. The main purpose of these few pages is to show how I reached this conclusion. Having given a survey of opinion as to the fact of the obligation, I shall touch only briefly on some closely connected questions.

#### OFFICIAL STATEMENTS

My survey would be unintelligible without at least a cursory preliminary review of the official statements on which much of the theological discussion is now focused. The principal statements are the following.

A reply of the Holy Office, dated June 27, 1715, concerns the case of Charles Ferdinand Wipperman, a German convert from Lutheranism.<sup>1</sup> Upon his conversion "some errors" were discovered in his Lutheran baptism. Hence the Holy Office was asked whether he should be rebaptized; if so, whether absolutely or conditionally; whether he must make a confession of all the sins of his past life; and whether the confession, if necessary, should precede or follow conditional baptism. The answer, confirmed by the Pope, was that he should be conditionally baptized, then confess the sins of his past life and be absolved conditionally.

In reply to a query from the Bishop of Philadelphia concerning the reception of converted heretics into the Church, an instruction of the Holy Office, dated July 20, 1859, insisted that there must first be diligent inquiry about former baptism.<sup>2</sup> In the event of an insoluble "dubium probabile de baptismi validitate," the convert should first make the abjuration with profession of faith, then be baptized conditionally, then confess his sins and be absolved conditionally.

The Second Plenary Council of Baltimore ordered that converts from

<sup>1</sup> *Fontes CIC*, IV, n. 780; *Coll. SCPF*, I (1907), n. 286.

<sup>2</sup> *Fontes CIC*, IV, n. 953. See *Rituale Romanum: Supplementum ad usum cleri Amer. septent.* (1944), p. (16). This supplement, besides recalling the provisions of the instruction, gives the new Profession of Faith to be used in our country.

heresy should be received into the Church according to the manner prescribed by the instruction just mentioned.<sup>3</sup> This council called particular attention to the fact that heretics are often negligent about the essentials of baptism. Nevertheless, it ordered that each case should be carefully investigated, and only when there was an insoluble "dubium probabile invaliditatis" should baptism be repeated conditionally.

A petition addressed to the Holy See by the Bishops of England stated that the First Provincial Synod of Westminster prescribed that when converts from Protestantism are received into the Church, "confessio etiam sacramentalis semper in tali casu est exigenda."<sup>4</sup> The vast majority of English priests interpreted this to mean integral confession and were accustomed to insist on its fulfilment. But some priests, following the opinion of Gury that confession is not obligatory on the occasion of conditional baptism, were not demanding an integral confession. The bishops were alarmed by this latter practice; they feared that it would lead to a general relaxation of the duty of integral confession. They enumerated many disadvantages of the lenient practice, and they laid stress on the fact that the younger members of the Anglican clergy were very careful about baptizing and as a consequence there was an increasing number of people "de quorum baptismatis infantilis valore non licet dubitare." The bishops therefore asked: "Must converts in England make a sacramental confession, in accordance with the decree of the Provincial synod which the Holy See itself approved; and must this confession be integral?" The Holy Office replied (Dec. 17, 1868) in the affirmative to both parts of the question and ordered that a copy of the answer given in the Wipperman case be sent to the English Bishops.<sup>5</sup>

When the Archbishop of Quebec asked whether the reply given to England applied to other places, Cardinal Barnabo, Prefect of the SCPF, answered that this decree contains a universal law which is binding everywhere; and he added that the teaching of the opposite opinion may not be allowed. His letter is dated July 12, 1869.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Nn. 240-42.

<sup>4</sup> The complete text of this extremely interesting petition, as well as the reply and the text of the Wipperman decree, is given in: *ASS*, IV (1875), 320; *Nouvelle revue théologique*, I (1869), 212; Konings, "Introduction," p. lix; and Mannajoli, pp. 141 and 139.

<sup>5</sup> This seems to have been the first time the Wipperman decree was made public. The decree is here mistakenly dated June 17 (instead of 27), and this date is used in many citations.

<sup>6</sup> *Coll. SCPF*, II (1907), n. 1338, footnote. See also *Ecclesiastical Review*, XXXVIII (1908), 511. There has been much controversy over the authoritative value of this letter. Mannajoli (pp. 197-200) presents strong arguments for considering it the merely personal opinion of Cardinal Barnabo.

To the Vicar Apostolic of Grass Valley, who asked whether catechumens could make a sacramental confession before baptism, absolute or conditional, the Holy Office replied on December 2, 1874: before absolute baptism, no sacramental confession is possible; but, in the case of those "qui debent baptizari sub conditione," it is permissible, for greater solemnity, to have them make their confession before the conditional baptism, then repeat it summarily after the baptism and receive conditional absolution.<sup>7</sup>

The Third Plenary Council of Baltimore reaffirmed the provisions of Baltimore II.<sup>8</sup>

The Plenary Council of Latin America, held in Rome in 1889 and approved by Pope Leo XIII, prescribed that converts whose first baptism is found to be doubtful are to be conditionally rebaptized and, "praevia sacramentali confessione peccatorum praeteritae vitae, ab iis sub conditione absolvantur."<sup>9</sup> Several authors mention that the Council of Manila has a similar prescription for the Philippines.

#### AUTHORS' PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

These documents form what I might call the juridical background for my survey. There is also a theological background—no doubt, well known to all of us—which should be briefly recalled. Independently of the foregoing documents, theologians agree, by reason of clearly established dogmatic principles, on these points: (1) if it is certain that a convert was not baptized or that his Protestant baptism was invalid, he is to be baptized absolutely and he cannot receive the sacrament of penance; and (2) if it is certain that he is already validly baptized, he must not be rebaptized and he must make an integral confession. Also, it is rather commonly held by theologians that, when the convert's first baptism is slightly but not solidly dubious, he may, or even should, be rebaptized conditionally. But this conditional baptism is merely for greater security, and the convert is not exempted from the divine law of integral confession, because the doubt is not sufficient to constitute a solid probability.

The foregoing points are not objects of controversy. However, since at least the early part of the eighteenth century there has been much controversy over the necessity of integral confession for a convert when his first baptism is solidly doubtful. On the question of the divine law alone, and independently of official pronouncements, this controversy follows two main lines. Some authors, thinking principally in terms of the duties of the

<sup>7</sup> *Fontes CIC*, IV, n. 1035. Incidentally, this document shows clearly that when the Holy Office prescribed confession it meant integral confession.

<sup>8</sup> N. 122.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted from Mannajoli, p. 149.

baptized, hold that integral confession is obligatory unless it is practically certain that the first baptism was invalid. (I shall refer to this as the strict opinion.) Others, thinking more in terms of the doubtful character of the sins with respect to absolution and of the probability of their remission by the second baptism, think that the principle, *lex dubia non obligat*, is just as applicable to this case as it is to other cases of doubt, e.g., sins that were probably not mortal or that have probably been confessed. (I shall refer to this as the lenient opinion.)

During the last century the official pronouncements have played a prominent part in this controversy. Proponents of the strict opinion tend to see in them a confirmation of their view that integral confession is always and everywhere of obligation for the conditionally rebaptized convert. Defenders of the lenient opinion tend to deny the universal force of the documents, and for one reason or another to restrict their application to definite places. It is not for me to judge whether the interpretations given by both sides are always objective; nor is it my present purpose to review or appraise the complicated and sometimes utterly unconvincing speculations involved in this controversy. My purpose is mainly practical. I want to show what theologians hold in practice about the convert's duty to make an integral confession when he is received into the Church with conditional baptism.

One large group of authors explicitly admits the existence of the obligation in certain localities, but denies that it is universal. Thus, Jone-Adelman,<sup>10</sup> Healy,<sup>11</sup> and Goodwine<sup>12</sup> say that integral confession is obligatory in the United States. With England primarily in mind, Mahoney writes: "For people in this country, and in other places where the positive law insists on the necessity of confession, the question is purely academic, for there can be no doubt whatever that confession must always accompany the reception of a convert."<sup>13</sup> His context shows that he is talking about integral confession. With equal clarity, Slater admits the obligation in England, the United States, and other places where the positive law requires it.<sup>14</sup> Martin agrees with this.<sup>15</sup> Arregui<sup>16</sup> and Ferreres<sup>17</sup> also agree; and both

<sup>10</sup> *Moral Theology* (1945), n. 550.      <sup>11</sup> *Christian Guidance* (1949), p. 144.

<sup>12</sup> *The Reception of Converts* (1944), pp. 104-108.

<sup>13</sup> *Questions and Answers*, I (1946), q. 24.

<sup>14</sup> *A Manual of Moral Theology*, II (1908; with notes by Martin), 149. See also his *Cases of Conscience*, II (1912), 154-56.

<sup>15</sup> It is his practice to mention any disagreement with Slater.

<sup>16</sup> *Summarium theologiae moralis* (1948), n. 576.

<sup>17</sup> Gury-Ferreres, *Casus conscientiae*, II (1921), nn. 423-26. See also Ferreres-Mondria, *Compendium theologiae moralis*, II (1950), n. 492. Though Ferreres defended the opinion that the obligation could not be imposed universally, he thought the strict opinion to be more probable speculatively.

mention England, Latin America, and the Philippines as places affected by such legislation. Ubach admits that integral confession is the prescribed norm for Latin America.<sup>18</sup> D'Annibale concedes the obligation for England,<sup>19</sup> as also does Ogetti when he writes tersely: "Et pro Anglia quaestio finita est."<sup>20</sup> Davis, too, recognizes the obligation for converts in England.<sup>21</sup>

As early as 1905, Genicot appended the following practical conclusion to his discussion of this topic:

Therefore, where the Holy See or the bishops prescribe confession, it must regularly be required of converts. However, since the law is probably only ecclesiastical, whenever it is probable that the conditional baptism is valid, the duty [of confessing] should be urged with that moderation which befits positive laws. In other regions, confession is to be highly recommended as a more secure means of remitting the sins committed, but it is not strictly required except in the case in which the validity of the first baptism is only slightly doubtful and therefore the remission of the sins through the conditional baptism would not be solidly probable.<sup>22</sup>

Salsmans left this conclusion unchanged.<sup>23</sup> Cappello,<sup>24</sup> Piscetta-Gennaro,<sup>25</sup> and Tanquerey<sup>26</sup> follow it almost *ad litteram*; and Vermeersch,<sup>27</sup> Regatillo,<sup>28</sup> and Iorio<sup>29</sup> express the same idea in slightly different ways. These and the authors previously cited agree, therefore, in saying that the obligation exists in particular places but it may not be imposed universally. Mannajoli, whose book on the duties of the doubtfully baptized is a classic,<sup>30</sup> would sponsor a somewhat similar practical conclusion, but he differs radically from the other authors in his theory. Many of the authors mentioned favor the view that in cases of solid doubt the obligation stems from ecclesiastical

<sup>18</sup> *Theologia moralis*, II (1935), nn. 1805–1806. See also n. 2157, where he explains the practical procedure for the reception of converts.

<sup>19</sup> *Summula theologiae moralis*, III (1908), n. 301, note 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Synopsis rerum moralium* (1912), nn. 3163–68.

<sup>21</sup> *Moral and Pastoral Theology*, III (1943), 350.

<sup>22</sup> *Institutiones theologiae moralis*, II (1905; the last edition by Genicot alone), n. 259.

<sup>23</sup> See Genicot-Salsmans, II (1946), n. 259.

<sup>24</sup> *De sacramentis*, II (1944), n. 38.

<sup>25</sup> *Elementa theologiae moralis*, V (1938), n. 606.

<sup>26</sup> *Synopsis theologiae moralis*, I (1936), n. 202.

<sup>27</sup> *Theologia moralis*, III (1948), n. 515. See also Vermeersch-Creusen, *Eptiome*, II (1934), n. 184.

<sup>28</sup> *Jus sacramentarium*, I (1945), n. 398.

<sup>29</sup> *Theologia moralis*, III (1939), n. 357.

<sup>30</sup> *De obligationibus Christianorum propriis* (Rome: Pustet, 1913). The book is entirely concerned with the duties of the doubtfully baptized, with special reference to the problem of integral confession for converted heretics. It leaves no problem untouched and incidentally creates new problems.

law. He rejects this explanation. He thinks that the obligation is from divine law and per se universal, but because of its obscurity it may be subjectively doubtful or even unknown in places where the Church does not officially urge it.

Sabetti,<sup>31</sup> Konings,<sup>32</sup> the *Casuist*,<sup>33</sup> and the *Ecclesiastical Review*<sup>34</sup> all hold that in the United States the conditionally rebaptized convert from Protestantism must make an integral confession. Sabetti's attitude towards the universal obligation is not clear to me. Konings implies universality when he says the reason for the obligation is the presumptive validity of baptism till it is proved invalid. The *Casuist* and the *Ecclesiastical Review* leave little doubt that they think it is universal.

Many authors, without distinguishing between places, simply defend the opinion that the obligation is universal. Most emphatic of these are Marc-Gestermann-Raus,<sup>35</sup> Prümmer,<sup>36</sup> Lehmkuhl,<sup>37</sup> Haine,<sup>38</sup> and *Nowelle revue théologique*.<sup>39</sup> Marc-Gestermann-Raus do not even make a bow to the lenient opinion. Prümmer says it may not be reduced to practice. The others believe it untenable after the decree of December 17, 1868. Slightly milder in their attitude are Merkelbach,<sup>40</sup> Bulot,<sup>41</sup> Noldin-Schmitt,<sup>42</sup> and Wouters.<sup>43</sup> The two latter defend the universal obligation with "videtur"; and Bulot uses "omnino videtur." Merkelbach, while not absolutely denying all vestige of probability to the lenient opinion, says that it would be very imprudent to reduce it to practice because, if one cannot accept the duty of integral confession at the moment of conversion, it is hardly likely that one will ever accept it. Aertnys-Damen say the lenient opinion is probable, the strict view more probable; but their practical conclusion is that the conditionally rebaptized convert must always make the confession as demanded by the replies of 1715 and 1868.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Compendium theologiae moralis* (1898), n. 725, q. 3. The material in this number is unchanged in Sabetti-Barrett (1931).

<sup>32</sup> *Theologia moralis*, II (1880), n. 1340, q. 3.

<sup>33</sup> I (1906), 7-10.

<sup>34</sup> XXXVIII (1908), 508-514.

<sup>35</sup> *Institutiones morales*, II (1934), n. 1655.

<sup>36</sup> *Manuale theologiae moralis*, III (1936), n. 138.

<sup>37</sup> *Theologia moralis*, II (1914), nn. 424-26; *Casus conscientiae*, II (1902), nn. 288-92.

<sup>38</sup> *Elementa theologiae moralis*, III (1894), 201-202.

<sup>39</sup> I (1869), 207-214. And see LI (1924), 385-99, for G. Arendt's defense of the speculative position of his confreres, Lehmkuhl and Noldin.

<sup>40</sup> *Quaestiones pastorales*, VI (1935), 51-52.

<sup>41</sup> *Compendium theologiae moralis*, II (1908), n. 435.

<sup>42</sup> *Summa theologiae moralis*, III (1940), n. 230.

<sup>43</sup> *Manuale theologiae moralis*, II (1933), n. 319, disp. 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Theologia moralis*, II (1944), n. 293.

A few moralists who do not explicitly admit the existence of the obligation in certain places seem to do this implicitly in the way they defend the opinion that the obligation is not universal. For instance, Ballerini, after citing the reply for England, immediately tries to show that this decree concerns special conditions in England and that it does not affect the controversy over the universal obligation.<sup>45</sup> A similar procedure is followed by Bucceroni,<sup>46</sup> Cornelisse,<sup>47</sup> and Coronata,<sup>48</sup> all of whom suggest that the decrees given for particular places can be reasonably explained as referring to special circumstances.

I have given this survey of authors, not for the purpose of "counting heads," but because I think that such a survey is of immense help in interpreting the laws and practices of the Church. I admit that the survey is confined to written works and that it does not include all of these. Yet it seems to be sufficiently broad to furnish a basis for judging common theological opinion. And to me it indicates clearly that, though there is still controversy over the universality of the obligation, there is substantial agreement that integral confession is obligatory in those places where the positive law demands it. This is the common denominator of all opinions. Some authors explicitly admit the particular obligation, but deny it is general; others implicitly admit the particular in trying to prove it is not general; and others *a fortiori* defend the particular in asserting that it is general.

#### ARE SOLID DOUBTS INCLUDED?<sup>49</sup>

It has been suggested that the reply for England was based on the assumption that converts' first baptisms would be only slightly doubtful. A similar claim has been made regarding the law for our country. And it is also suggested, if not implicitly asserted, that such eminent probabilists as D'Annibale, Ballerini, Bucceroni, Genicot, Iorio, Salsmans, and Vermeersch would say that, even in countries where the positive law demands it, the convert need not make an integral confession, if his first baptism is solidly doubtful.<sup>50</sup> I have found only slight foundation for these claims and very sound indications to the contrary.

<sup>45</sup> *Opus theologiae moralis*, V (1900), n. 22.

<sup>46</sup> *Institutiones theologiae moralis*, III (1915), n. 672.

<sup>47</sup> *Compendium theologiae moralis*, III (1910), n. 257.

<sup>48</sup> *De sacramentis*, I (1943), n. 415.

<sup>49</sup> Since this brief essay is already overweighted with references, I shall not repeat the references in this section, but only note those that are new.

<sup>50</sup> See the articles and answers-to-questions by Joseph P. Donovan, C.M., in *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, XLI (1941), 699-706; 893-897; XLIII (1943), 1118-19; LI (1951), 558, 856-58.

It is true that the English bishops stressed the fact that the younger Anglican clergy were very careful about baptizing. But is it reasonable to interpret the petition and the reply solely in terms of this statement? Were all Anglican converts baptized by these younger men? If they were, one might well wonder why there was any need of rebaptizing, for the bishops say that these particular Anglican baptisms were unquestionably valid. It seems to me, therefore, that the very stress put on the statement about the younger men implies that other Protestant clergymen were not so careful. Hence, the complete picture includes converts about whose previous baptisms there could be varying degrees of doubt. The custom of the majority of English priests, following the injunction of the Westminster Synod and even preceding it, was to demand an integral confession of all conditionally rebaptized converts, without distinguishing degrees of doubt. The bishops wanted to know whether this custom should be continued and observed by all; and the reply of the Holy Office was an unqualified affirmative. There is no evidence that either the petition or the reply was limited to cases of slight doubt.

The English bishops were referred to the Wipperman case. This case was not solved on any general presumption favoring Lutheran baptism. It was an individual case, in which "nonnulli errores" had been detected in the Protestant baptism. Perhaps these errors were the foundation for only a slight doubt, but there is no indication of this. And the Holy Office was asked whether the convert should be rebaptized absolutely or conditionally. Is it likely that absolute rebaptism would have been considered if it was clear that the doubt was only slight?

Regarding the United States, the first pertinent document is the instruction of 1859. The Holy Office ordered careful investigation of each case. The result of this investigation would be certainty about validity or invalidity, or a "dubium probabile." Obviously, the "dubium probabile" includes all cases that are not certain.<sup>51</sup> Baltimore II and III have similar instructions. And in the reply of 1874 to the Vicar Apostolic of Grass Valley, the Holy Office was speaking of converts "qui *debent* baptizari sub conditione" (italics mine) when it referred to integral confession. There is no sound reason for limiting any of these documents to cases of slight doubt, and there are very good reasons for saying that they include all doubts.

<sup>51</sup> In this connection let me call attention to a point that may be overlooked in this discussion. A convert is not to be considered as doubtfully baptized when the reason favoring his baptism is not solidly probable. When this reason is so slight as not to induce a real probability, the convert need not make any confession, and the baptism need not, strictly speaking, be conferred *sub conditione*. Cf. Lehmkühl, *Casus conscientiae*, II, n. 292; Mannajoli, p. 39, n. 51.



Nor can it be reasonably supposed that the Holy Office and the two Councils thought that *de facto* the insoluble doubts about Protestant baptisms would always be slight. Baltimore II, for instance, speaks so strongly about the negligence of Protestant ministers in baptizing that it must have expected that cases of solid doubt would not be rare.

Another point worthy of consideration is the fact that in all its replies the Holy Office consistently said that the conditionally rebaptized convert should be given conditional absolution. To me, this is an added argument that the Holy Office was not limiting its injunction to cases of slight doubt; for it is not customary to insist that absolution be conditional unless there is a sound reason for doubting about some essential.

As for the theologians, certainly D'Annibale's brief treatment of this question allows for the interpretation that he thought the reply for England might be based on the supposition that the converts' first baptisms were only slightly doubtful. This could also be a reasonable interpretation of Ballerini in his *Opus theologicum*. Yet, in his notes on Gury, Ballerini clearly tends to admit that the reply for England has a bearing on the general controversy and that it favors the strict opinion.<sup>52</sup> He would do this only if he were thinking in terms of solidly doubtful baptism. Bucceroni's position is no clearer, because he holds that any doubt which is sufficient to allow conditional rebaptism must be a real probability, sufficiently strong to allow for the application of the principle, *lex dubia non obligat*. If he really means a solid doubt in the ordinary sense of the term, then he implicitly admits that converts in England must make an integral confession when their previous baptisms are solidly doubtful; if he means something less than solid in the ordinary sense, he is departing from the principle of true probabilism by exempting converts outside of England from the duty of integral confession.

Genicot suggested that the legislation for England might be based on a presumption that converts' first baptisms were only slightly doubtful. But he mentions this only as one possibility. When he is speaking in general about local legislation, he admits that cases of solid doubt can be included. But in this event, he says, the law is probably only ecclesiastical. And it should be noted here, I think, that any author who explains the convert's obligation to make an integral confession as arising from a merely ecclesiastical law must be talking about cases of solid doubt, because everyone admits (except possibly Bucceroni?) that the divine law of integral confession applies when the convert's first baptism is only slightly doubtful.

Still speaking of Genicot, let me point out that his practical conclusion,

<sup>52</sup> See the 6th (1880, n. 419) and 14th (1901, n. 231) editions of Gury, II.

which I have previously quoted, would be ridiculous if he meant that the obligation of integral confession, as imposed on a convert by a law that is probably only ecclesiastical, is restricted to cases of slight doubt. Salsmans, as I have said before, kept Genicot's conclusion. And in their *Casus conscientiae*, Genicot-Salsmans make it perfectly clear that, when local legislation prescribes integral confession, this confession must be made by converts whose previous baptisms are solidly doubtful.<sup>53</sup>

Vermeersch and Iorio have substantially the same as Genicot; and so do Cappello, Piscetta-Gennaro, Regatillo, and Tanquerey. Ferreres clearly holds that the ecclesiastical legislation extends to solidly doubtful cases. Healy includes under our legislation the case in which "the validity of the previous baptism is solidly doubtful"; and both the *Casulist* and the *Ecclesiastical Review* discuss cases based on the supposition that the validity of the first baptism is solidly doubtful. Both hold that the obligation exists in our country. Sabetti does not explicitly distinguish between doubts, but his opinion cannot be reasonably interpreted as restricted to slight doubts; for he says that in our country conditionally rebaptized converts must always make an integral confession.

Most of the authors I have mentioned are probabilists who hold the lenient opinion in the general controversy. They do not deny that the decrees and local laws extend to cases of solid doubt; rather, they admit this and tend to explain it as merely ecclesiastical law.

#### ECCLESIASTICAL LAW?

If I may be permitted the expression of a strictly personal opinion, I should like to say that I favor the explanation that in cases of solid doubt about previous baptism the convert's obligation to make an integral confession comes only from ecclesiastical law.<sup>54</sup> Against this view some raise the objection that such a law is beyond the Church's competence. It is said, for instance, that integrity of confession is a matter of divine law and the Church cannot change it. It is true that the Church cannot change the law by abrogation or derogation. But I have yet to see a convincing argument that the Church cannot add to the divine law when it judges this necessary for the good of souls. The divine law does not certainly prescribe yearly confession or confession before Communion; but the Church orders these things for those who have committed mortal sin, and no one questions its authority.

<sup>53</sup> 8th ed. (1948), case 779.

<sup>54</sup> I favor this explanation because on the one hand it seems that I cannot reasonably deny the fact of the obligation, and on the other I am not at all convinced by any of the arguments that the divine law extends to this case.

Mannajoli contends that integral confession is too difficult to be the object of a human law. This may or may not be true regarding integral confession in the way that Catholics ordinarily have to make it—that is, year after year for many years. But it is not clear to me that the making of one confession on the occasion of reception into the Church involves so great a difficulty for the average person that it can be commanded by God alone. As a matter of fact, the law of confession before Communion is often extremely difficult for Catholics, even outside the emergencies when they are justified in receiving Communion after an act of perfect contrition; and the law of yearly confession forces them to make an integral confession at that time, though the obscurity of the divine law of frequency might allow them to postpone it for a long time.

But is not this an unjustifiable humiliation of converts? This objection sounds more serious than it actually is. It is true that a regulation demanding integral confession in all cases of conditional rebaptism imposes on the convert whose previous baptism is solidly doubtful the duty of confessing sins which, according to one school of theologians, are outside the scope of the divine law. But such a regulation is not per se unjustifiable. And it might be justifiable for many reasons, such as the necessity of having at least substantial uniformity in dealing with conditionally baptized converts and the necessity of safeguarding the divine law from frequent abuse by confessors who would be inclined to look upon all Protestant baptisms as solidly doubtful. As for the humiliation, it is rare that this cannot be greatly tempered for the sincere convert by the confessor who faithfully observes sound principles of pastoral theology.

*St. Mary's College*

GERALD KELLY, S.J.