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BIOGRAPHY FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES
TO THE PRESENT DAY

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AGNELUS, ag'nel'us (called also Andrew): The historian of the Church of Ravenna; b. in that city early in the ninth century [some authorities say in 805, of a rich and noble family]; the year of his death is unknown. He entered the clerical state very early, and became abbot of the monasteries of St. Mary ad Blachernas and St. Bartholomew, both in Ravenna. He was ordained priest by Archbishop Petronacius (817-835). His reputation for learning induced his brother clergy to ask him to write the history of the local church, and he began his *Liber pontificalis Ecclesie Ravennatis* before 838, and finished it after 846. It follows the model of the Roman *Liber pontificalis*, giving a series of biographies of the bishops of Ravenna, beginning with Apollinaris, said to have been a disciple of St. Peter and to have died as a martyr July 23, 75 (or 78), in whose memory the Basilica in Classe at Ravenna was dedicated in the year 549. The last bishop mentioned is George, whose death falls apparently in 846. The characteristics of the work are its strong tendency to the expression of local patriotism, and the interest which it shows in buildings, monuments, and other works of art. It is one of the earliest historical works to make an extensive use of architectural monuments as sources. Agnellus had little command of written documents; he availed himself of oral tradition wherever possible, and supplied its deficiencies by a well-meaning imagination.

(A. HAUCK.)

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AGNES, SAINT: A saint commemorated in the Roman Church on Jan. 21 and 28 (the Gelasian Liturgy giving the former; the Gregorian, the latter date), and in the Greek Church on Jan. 14 and 21 and July 5. Since the oldest documents (the *Calendarium Romanum*, the *Calendarium Africanum*, and the Gothic and Oriental *Missale*) agree in fixing Jan. 21 as the day of her death, Bolland has rightly assigned to that day the acts of her martyrdom. The year of her death, according to Ruinart, was about 304. The cause and manner of her martyrdom are given in a very legendary manner by an undoubtedly spurious *Passion* in the older editions of the works of St. Ambrose, which states that, having made a vow of perpetual virginity while still a child, she successfully resisted the wooing of a noble youth, the son of Symphronius, the city prefect, and embellishes the narrative with many wonders. Her hair suddenly grew so long and thick as to serve for a cloak; a light from heaven struck her importunate lover lifeless to the ground; when she was bound to the stake the flames were extinguished in answer to her prayer. After she had been beheaded at the command of the prefect, and had been buried by her parents in their field on the Via Nomentana, outside of Rome, she appeared to her people in glorified form with a little lamb at her side, and continued to perform miracles, such as the healing of the princess Constantia, for which, it is said, she was honored

under Constantine the Great by the erection of a basilica at her tomb (Sant' Agnese fuori le Mura). Evidence of the high antiquity of her worship is given by Ambrose in several of his genuine writings, by Jerome (*Epist.*, cxxx., *ad Demetriadem*), by Augustine, by the Christian poets Damasus and Prudentius, and by others.

In medieval art St. Agnes is usually represented with a lamb, which indicates her character as representative of youthful chastity and innocence, but may have been derived from her name, which is to be connected with the Greek *hagnē*, "chaste" (cf. Augustine, *Sermones*, cclxxiii. 6). Two lambs are blessed every year on Jan. 21 in the Agnes basilica, mentioned above (one of the principal churches of Rome, after which one of the cardinal priests is called), and their wool is used to make the archiepiscopal pallia which are consecrated by the pope (see PALLIUM). O. ZÖCKLER†.

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AGNOETÆ, ag'no-i'ti or -é'té (Gk. *agnoētai*, "ignorant"): 1. Name of a sect of the fourth century, a branch of the Eunomians (q.v.), who followed the lead of Theophronius of Cappadocia. They were so named because they limited the divine omniscience to the present, maintaining that God knew the past merely by memory, and the future by divination (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.*, v. 24).

2. The name was borne also by the sect of the sixth century, founded by Themistius, a deacon of Alexandria, and sometimes called Themistians. They consisted chiefly of the Severian faction of the Monophysites, and maintained that, as the body of Christ was subject to natural conditions, so also his human soul must be thought of as not omniscient. In support of their view they quoted Mark xiii. 32 and John xi. 34. The heresy was revived by the Adoptionists in the eighth century.

AGNOSTICISM: A philologically objectionable and philosophically unnecessary but very convenient term, invented toward the end of the nineteenth century (1869) as a designation of the skeptical habit of mind then quite prevalent. It is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as the doctrine which holds that "the existence of anything beyond and behind natural phenomena is unknown, and (so far as can be judged) unknowable, and especially that a First Cause and an unseen world are subjects of which we know nothing." It is thus equivalent to the common philosophical term, skepticism, although expressing the phase of thought designated by both alike from the point of view of its outcome rather than of its method. Some have held, it is true, that the true agnostic is not

he who doubts whether human powers can attain to the knowledge of what really is, or specifically to the knowledge of God and spiritual things, but he who denies this. But there is a dogmatic skepticism, and there is no reason why there may not be a more or less hesitant agnosticism. The essential element in both is that the doubt or denial rests on distrust of the power of the human mind to ascertain truth. It is common, to be sure, to speak of several types of agnosticism, differing the one from the other according as the basis of the doubt or denial of the attainability of truth is ontological, generally psychological, definitely epistemological, or logical. But useful as this discrimination may be as a rough classification of modes of presenting the same fundamental doctrine, it is misleading if it suggests that the real basis of doubt or denial is not in every case epistemological. When it is said, for example, that God and spiritual things are in their very nature unknowable, that of course means that they are unknowable to such powers as man possesses; nothing that exists can be intrinsically unknowable, and if unknowable to men must be so only because of limitations in their faculties of knowledge. And when one is told that the sole trouble is that the balance of evidence is hopelessly in equilibrium, and the mind is therefore left in suspense, that of course means only that such minds as men have are too coarse scales for weighing such delicate matters.

Agnosticism is in short a theory of the nature and limits of human intelligence. It is that particular theory which questions or denies the capacity of human intelligence to attain assured knowledge, whether with respect to all spheres of truth, or, in its religious application, with respect to the particular sphere of religious truth. As mankind has universally felt itself in possession of a body of assured knowledge, and not least in the sphere of religious truth,—nay as mankind instinctively reaches out to and grasps what it unavoidably looks upon as assured knowledge, and not least in the sphere of religious truth,—agnosticism becomes, in effect, that tendency of opinion which pronounces what men in general consider knowledge more or less misleading, and therefore more or less noxious. Sometimes, no doubt, in what we may, perhaps, call the half-agnostic, these illusions are looked upon as rough approximations to truth, and are given a place of importance in the direction of human life, under some such designation as “regulative truths” (Mansel), or “value judgments” (Ritschl), or “symbolical conceptions” (Sabatier). The consistent agnostic, however, must conceive them as a body of mere self-deceptions, from which he exhorts men to cleanse their souls as from cant (Huxley).

In effect, therefore, agnosticism impoverishes, and, in its application to religious truth, secularizes and to this degree degrades life. Felicitating itself on a peculiarly deep reverence for truth on the ground that it will admit into that category only what can make good its right to be so considered under the most stringent tests, it deprives itself of the enjoyment of this truth by leaving the category either entirely or in great part empty. Re-

fusing to assert there is no truth, it yet misses what Bacon declares “the sovereign good of human nature,” viz., “the inquiry of truth, which is the love-making or wooing of it,—the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it,—and the belief of truth which is the enjoying of it.” On the ground that certain knowledge of God and spiritual things is unattainable, it bids man think and feel and act as if there were no God and no spiritual life and no future existence. It thus degenerates into a practical atheism. Refusing to declare there is no God, it yet misses all there may be of value and profit in the recognition of God.

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Modern agnosticism takes its start in the philosophy of Kant and runs its course through Hamilton and Mansel to culminate in the teaching of Herbert Spencer; its most authoritative exposition is given in their writings and in those of their followers. Good select bibliographies of the subject may be found in A. B. Bruce, *Apologetics*, p. 146, London, 1892, in F. R. Beattie, *Apologetics, or the Rational Vindication of Christianity*, i. 521, 531, Richmond, 1903, and in R. Flint, *Agnosticism*, London, 1903, foot-notes, especially that on p. 643, where the titles of works on the cognoscibility of God are collected. Consult, besides the above, from the Christian dogmatic standpoint, J. Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, ib. 1903; C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, I. i., ch. iv., New York, 1871; B. P. Bowne, *The Philosophy of H. Spencer*, ib. 1874 (a criticism of Spencer's agnosticism); J. Owen, *Evenings with the Sceptics*, 2 vols., London, 1881; J. McCosh, *The Agnosticism of Hume and Huxley*, New York, 1884; J. Martineau, *Study of Religion*, I. i., ch. i.-iv., London, 1889; H. Wace, *Christianity and Agnosticism*, Edinburgh, 1895; J. Iverach, *Is God Knowable?* London, 1887. The agnostics' position is set forth in H. Spencer, *First Principles*, ib. 1904 (called “the Bible of Agnosticism”); J. Fiske, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*, Boston, 1874; K. Pearson, *The Ethic of Freethought*, London, 1887; R. Bithell, *Agnostic Problems*, ib. 1887; idem, *The Creed of a Modern Agnostic*, ib. 1888; idem, *Handbook of Scientific Agnosticism*, ib. 1892; *Christianity and Agnosticism, a Controversy consisting of Papers by H. Wace, T. H. Huxley, Bishop Magee, and Mrs. Ward*, New York, 1889 (this discussion aroused wide interest); L. Stephen, *An Agnostic's Apology*, London, 1893; T. Huxley, *Collected Essays*, vol. v., 9 vols., ib. 1894 (contains his side of the controversy with Dr. Wace); W. Scott Palmer, *An Agnostic's Progress*, London, 1906.

AGNUS DEI, ag'nus dē'i (“Lamb of God”):

1. An ancient liturgical formula in the celebration of the Eucharist, found in some manuscripts of the Sacramentary of Gregory the Great after the Lord's Prayer and the *Libera*. The full text, based on John i. 29, is “Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.” It is found also in the ancient Eastern hymn which was annexed to the *Gloria in Excelsis* (see LITURGICAL FORMULAS, II., 3) and was early introduced into the Western Church in Latin translation, where the form is “Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe, Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis; qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram.” When the Second Trullan Council (692) undertook to forbid the representation and invocation of Christ under the figure of the lamb, Pope Sergius I., to express the opposition of the Roman Church, decreed that the *Agnus* should be sung by priest and people at the Communion. After 767, under Adrian I., it was sung by the choir only. The ritual of the mass, based in this particular on a custom which can be traced to the beginning of the eleventh century,