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## OUR GUEST EDITOR THIS MONTH IS

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### "OUTSIDE THE CHURCH"

Outside the church there is no salvation. "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus." Modern man frowns on such a hard saying. And yet, I wish to uphold this sentence. But it makes no sense in isolation. If Protestants think it is too harsh, let us look at its corollary: "Extra salutem nulla ecclesia." Outside the history of salvation there is no church.

Outside the daily interpenetration of faith and life, Church and market place, the whole church is a painted wall. Outside the march of souls toward the coming of the Lord, the individual soul falls sick.

Why is that so? Why are the two sentences two sides of the same metabolism? Because man cannot become man except by entering the process by which God creates MAN out of men.

At any moment, this process is under way. God never intended to create men. He is creating MAN, one Son representing Him on this earth. Hence, how could an individuum, a sapling which is not yet re-grafted on the ONE MAN, who through his Head is called to become the Son—how could such an uprooted, lonely, isolated, atom in the Universe be called whole or healthy unless it gets "inside" this stream or process of creating the SON? The harsh sentence; "extra ecclesiam nulla salus," is not so harsh, after all. It is the logical and rational statement of fact and it is purely descriptive of man's real situation of an atom whose chemical "valences", whose social "contacts", whose spiritual "roots", are awaiting fulfilment.

But the stream of the economy of salvation is a stupendous meandering through undiscovered countries of the soul. The so-called visible Church, indeed, is a very small part of the network of this stream. And the visible Church mostly is reluctant to think of the Church of The Lord as the reality which precedes and remains greater than the stony churches in parishes and bishoprics. In other words, the corollary—"extra salutem nulla ecclesia"—is an encouragement to all incognito and incomplete life. You, uprooted, isolated, unrecognized, and in despair as you are, are just that atom which at this moment is in the crucible and whose valences, whose power to link up with others is in demand. For sanity results from any act of any one incomplete soul which takes root in the Body of Christ. And insanity results from any stone wall church from which the uprooted and isolated are repelled.

A new discovery made in the sources of Anselm of Canterbury's writings may show how this sentence, "outside the process of salvation there can be no church", actually has shaped the spirit of theology for the last nine hundred years. And that it is therefore high time to look through the rust and the dust gathered around scholasticism and theology.

Anselm of Canterbury (1034-1107) is famous for his argument on the existence of God. The adherents of Rome still insist that Anselm has proved the existence of God. Kant, equally energetically, rejected the argument. I discovered that Anselm really intended to humble the visible Church and the people who tried to define God, and His Church, and that he meant to encourage himself to believe in a yet unknown and greater God and Church to come.

These are the facts which I discovered. The argument of Anselm, when taken by itself as it is in philosophy, sounds pretty dry: "God is greater than anything you can imagine. But you at least can imagine something which is bigger than anything else. Since you can think such a bigger than anything else, God exists". This sounds at first utterly childish, and it estranges serious people from the Church to hear such arguments used. The true story is quite different and moving enough.

Anselm begins with a desperate prayer: "God, where are You? You are absent. I cannot find You. I have heard of You all my life. Now let Yourself be found by Your impotent servant". This means that the lonely human being, before entering the stream of salvation, is in despair. We are "absent" even more than God. We are absent from the gates to the good life. Anybody who is honest has to pray like Anselm often enough.

Then, indeed, comes the strange solution that Anselm, rationalizing on his own absence from the good life, excluded as he is from the swimming pool of health, holds up the strange formula: "God is 'majus' than anything". Majus means in Latin, both; bigger and greater. And it certainly is disgusting to hear Our God labelled majus—something bigger, or even greater, than anything else. For if God is a thing, He certainly cannot be Lord over Life and Death; neither can He be the Life Giver or the Spirit. Things are dead: things are objects of argument and litigation. The absent and despondent soul of man says funny "things" when he fancies that by calling God a thing, he will amount to anything

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Now the discovery: Anselm knew all this as well as you and I. He had quite another approach to find. In his manual of penance for the confessional, he read the following very profound truth: "Any sinner is apt to be far *too despondent* (this jibes with the experience of modern psychologists). They say: my sins are so terrible that they can never be forgiven. Not this then is the problem only that sinners are too proud and arrogant. The contrary is truer still: they consider themselves as damned." One or the other sexual offense given, one or the other moral blemish on their record and they conclude: the Church and the belief in God are not for me since this one thing separates me for ever, and for ever, and for ever anyway.

Nine tenths of the people deny God because they assume that in Heaven there is no room for them after what has happened. Divorced people, for instance, know that the Church frowns on divorce. So with the skeleton of their divorce in their closet, they won't even go near the Church buildings. It is at this point that the old eleventh century manual arises to its glorious height

which inspired Anselm. The (unknown) author of this classic exclaims: "Do not leave these people to their despair. Tell them that the devils only say God cannot do this or that. For God is greater than anything you might have done yourself or thought of as being God."

This God, Who is greater than anything, entered Anselm after he had admitted that God was absent; that God had forsaken him or he had forsaken God, and that he even was unable to decide between these two alternatives. In other words, the full life of God bursts solely on us when we really despair of ever having known God so far at all. Every concept formed by us of God (as a grand old Santa Claus, for instance) has to be sacrificed before God can enter. The experience of the absence of God is the very condition of his entering you as "*greater than anything yet in existence, or in your mind.*" The process of salvation consists of these new discoveries by every lonely and uprooted soul that God is indeed greater than anything he had learned about Him in Sunday School.

If the new discoveries of God are the process of salvation, then it is obvious that both sentences always have been true: one, "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus": two, "Extra salutem nulla ecclesia." For the Church, too, must always become greater than she has been.

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