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DOES THE END JUSTIFY THE MEANS ?

BY THE
REV. JOHN GERARD, S.J.

New and Revised Edition



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FRANK J. CROWLEY

DOES THE END JUSTIFY THE MEANS ?

BY THE REV. JOHN GERARD, S.J.

REVISED BY THE REV. H. THURSTON, S.J.

ALTHOUGH every other weapon in their armoury should fail them, proving when put to the proof but a fragile reed with a perverse habit of running into the hand that uses it, yet upon one point anti-Jesuit writers and speakers feel quite secure ; of the truth of one charge, they are persuaded, there can be no possible doubt. Do not Jesuits, as everybody knows, profess and practice the doctrine that “ the end justifies the means ” ? And is it not the acknowledged signification of this atrocious maxim, that when any advantage is to be gained for the Church, or the Pope, or, most especially, for their own unprincipled Order, any means however bad in itself becomes good, in view of the goodness of the purpose which it can be made to serve,—so that it is lawful and even meritorious to lie, or perjure oneself, or steal, or commit homicide, as the particular case requires ?

Here, thinks the controversialist, is something like an argument, something sound, solid, and compendious, portable and ever ready for use,—warranted to give his quietus at a moment's notice to any Papist or Jesuit that threatens to be troublesome, like the “ Protestant flail ” which men carried about their persons in the panic days of the Popish Plot.

Such a belief is undoubtedly very general, and if the man in the street entertains it, we can scarcely be surprised, for it comes to him upon the word of those whom he probably regards as authorities of the first rank, beyond whom it would be idle, if not impious, to attempt to mount. Has not, for instance, Mr. H. E. M. Stutfield



give the alms intending it as a bribe, he perverts the good means to a bad end. If he steal in order to give the alms, he endeavours to serve a good end with a bad means. If he sound a trumpet whilst giving his alms, he introduces a circumstance calculated to deprive him of his merit.

This being premised, let us turn to some Jesuit authors and examine their doctrine, selecting those by preference whom Mr. Cartwright proposes to put in the witness-box as representing his unbroken chain of Jesuit writers of first-rank standing.

*Busenbaum*¹ writes :

“ A precept forbidding what is wrong in itself must never be violated, not even through fear of death.”

[Things thus wrong in themselves being, for example, blasphemy, idolatry, impurity, slander,—as said above.]²

Laymann :³

“ The circumstance of a good end nowise benefits an action objectively bad, but leaves it simply and wholly bad—*e.g.*, He who steals to give an alms commits a bad action on the score of injustice, and does not perform a good action on the score of charity. . . . The reason is to be sought in the difference between moral good and moral evil : for, as St. Denis says, ‘ An action is good if all its constituent parts are good : it is bad if any one of them is bad,’⁴ which means that for an action to be morally good both the *object* [*i.e.*, the deed done], and the end, and the circumstances must be good : whereas if any one of them be defective, it will not be a good action, but vicious and evil.”

This doctrine Laymann confirms by the following quotation from St. Augustine’s *Enchiridion* :

“ What is known to be sinful must not be done under any pretext of a good cause, nor for any end as being a good one, nor with any intention professing to be good.”

And he thus sums the matter up :

“ Whenever the choice [of means] is bad, the intention

¹ *Medulla*, lib. i. tract. 2, c. 4, dub. 2, n. 1.

² v. *ibid.* dub. 2.

³ *Theol. mor.* lb. i. tract. ii. c. 9, n. 7. Mayence edition, 1654, 27.

⁴ “ *Bonum ex integra causa est, malum ex quocumque defectu.*”

[i.e., the end] is also bad. In other words, a vicious choice [of means] makes the intention also vicious."

*Escobar*¹ speaks in terms almost identical :

"The circumstance of a good end nowise benefits an act objectively bad, but leaves it simply and utterly bad ; v.g., to steal in order to give an alms, Because, a bad act is incapable of any moral goodness ; for what is any-wise bereft of the good it ought to have is simply bad."²

The doctrine taught by *Wagemann* is in exact agreement with that we have heard from his brethren, namely, that for an action to be good, end, means and circumstances must *severally* be good, while the badness of any one of these makes the whole action bad. His words, which must presently be textually cited and therefore need not be set down here, will serve also to declare the teaching of *Voit*, who adopted and incorporated with his own work the treatise of *Wagemann*, in which they are found.³

Gury says :

"Three sources of morality are reckoned—1° The *object* of the act. 2° Its circumstances. 3° The end of the person acting. All of these are absolutely required for a good action. If even one of them be bad, the action will become bad. Hence the well-known maxim, 'Bonum ex integra causa,' &c."⁴

It would be easy to multiply such testimonies indefinitely, but there can be no advantage in doing so, for all Catholic authors, whether Jesuit or not, lay down precisely the same doctrine, and usually in very much the

1 *Theol. mor.* Lyons, 1652, p. 81.

2 " Cf. D. Tho. 1-2. q. 8. a. 1."

3 *Theologia Moralis*, Wurzburg, 1769. *Tractatus prodromus de actibus humanis*. With the exception of the first nine lines, the substance of which he gives in another form, the whole of *Wagemann's* treatise *de actibus* is printed *verbatim et literatim* by *Voit*, whose marginal numbering of sections is, however, less by one in each case than *Wagemann's*. The treatise thus reproduced terminates with section 34, in *Voit* 33, but the latter continues, adding four sections more (34-37), apparently borrowed from some other author, since, like what goes before, they are marked with inverted commas down the margins.

4 *Compendium theologiæ moralis*, tract. i. c. iii. art. 2.

same words, a clear, crisp statement once made being constantly adopted and repeated by subsequent writers.¹

This, it must be allowed, is a strange method of teaching that a good end justifies the employment of bad means. Yet it is *these very same men* whom we have quoted, who are cited as laying down a doctrine diametrically opposite to that which we have heard from them. How can this be?

It comes about, we must reply, solely because certain writers, sedulously ignoring such plain and unambiguous declarations as the above, have fastened upon other phrases a meaning which, in the light of the principles thus ignored, they could not possibly bear, and have given forth the phrases so misinterpreted as being the sum and substance of Jesuit teaching. That they should have found an opportunity of so doing, is due to the circumstance that there is a sense in which we may truly say that certain means *are* justified or even sanctified by the end for which they are employed. It is by misrepresenting the scope and significance of utterances dealing with this particular class of cases that the slanderous charge we are examining has been trumped up.

It is, for instance, quite obvious that such things as acting, or singing, or hunting, or fishing, are in themselves absolutely "indifferent." But they may become unquestionably virtuous if undertaken from a motive of charity, to obtain funds for a hospital, or food for the starving poor. They may even be heroic, if heavy

¹Father E. R. Hull, S. J., communicates the following information:—

'I have made a *catena* of about thirty Jesuit authors, from Vasquez to Génicot, all expressly teaching that a good end does *not* justify an evil means.' The indirect evidence from this clears the whole body of scholastic theologians—not merely Jesuits—since from beginning to end not a single scholastic writer is cited as an opponent of the doctrine which they all clearly and consistently teach—none, in fact, are cited as antagonists, but ancient authors of the early centuries,—Cassian, an anonymous Greek commentator on Chrysostom, and some ambiguous phrases of Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine, and Abulensis. Had there been any scholastics to quote in this sense, they would not have gone so far back to look for objections.'

sacrifices or great hardships be entailed. These are instances of the end sanctifying the means, or of the means being elevated and ennobled by the end ; which, however, can only be when the means are capable of being sanctified, that is to say, as we have been told, when they are not intrinsically bad.

It is no less evident that certain actions which, though not intrinsically wrong, are not usually lawful, become lawful in view of a good end sufficiently serious to warrant their performance. Thus, for the purposes of a just war, it is allowed to kill men in battle : to save life, surgeons amputate legs and arms : for the protection of society, magistrates deprive burglars of their liberty : though it were wrong to support every trivial statement with an oath, we rightly speak on oath in a court of law. In such instances, and in such alone, can there be any question of the end justifying the means : that is to say, when the end is of serious importance, and when the means which it demands are capable of being justified, as not being intrinsically wrong, and being, moreover, proportionate to the end. No end whatsoever could possibly justify apostasy, or blasphemy, or theft, or adultery, or perjury.

It is of such cases, and only of such, that theologians speak when they lay down, as a mere *obiter dictum*, the maxim which has aroused so much horror, that "the end being lawful the means also are lawful," or that "for whom the end is licit, for him are the means also licit." This does not signify, *as they are careful to explain*, any or every means, but means which are not intrinsically wrong, and which the end necessarily or naturally postulates. The end, in fact, cannot possibly be lawful, unless there be lawful means proper for its attainment. No theologian in the world, Jesuit or other, ever said that the end being *good* the means are lawful.¹ To style

¹ Boethius, who wrote in the fifth century, and who certainly was not a theologian, still less a Jesuit, and of whom it is not absolutely certain that he was even a Christian, incidentally, as an example of the *major* of a syllogism, gives the proposition, *cujus finis est bonus ipsum est quoque bonum* (*De differentiis topicis*, lib. ii.). The few moral theologians who comment upon this

it *lawful* is to imply that the means needed for its attainment are not immoral.

The case considered by almost all the Jesuit theologians "of first-rank standing," cited by Mr. Cartwright—viz., Busenbaum,² Laymann,³ Voit,⁴ Gury,⁵—is that of a criminal lying in prison under sentence, or with the certain prospect of death or mutilation or torture. Such a one, they assume, is entitled, if he can, to make his escape, for every man, however guilty, has a right to secure his own life and liberty ; just as, if condemned to death by starvation, he would not be bound to refuse food which his friends might manage to convey. Therefore, *within certain limits*, he may have recourse to the requisite means, that is to say, to such as, not being intrinsically wrong, the gravity of his situation warrants. He must not indeed, say the doctors offer violence to his keepers, nor injure them, nor tempt them to sinful neglect of duty by bribery or intoxication. But he may have them provided with a good dinner in the hope that they will be less vigilant after it ; or he may play a trick upon them to get them out of the way ; and though he foresee that they will get into trouble for their negligence in letting him escape, he is not on that account bound to forgo the chance of freedom, as it is not he but they themselves that directly bring their troubles upon them. Also, he may lawfully injure the property of the State, by breaking through bolts and bars and walls : though he may not, to secure his liberty, arrange to have his prison stormed and all those confined in it let loose : for in such a case his private gain would not be commensurate with the public loss. Nor can he rightly attempt to escape if he has given his parole that he will not do so.

utterance, observe that the means are assumed not to be evil, *e.g.* Silvius, Bonacina, and Loth.

² *Medulla theologiæ moralis*, l. iv. c. 3, d. 7, a. 2.

³ *Theol. mor.* Mayence, 1654, p. 75.

⁴ *Theol. mor.* Wurzburg, 1769, n. 191.

⁵ *Cas. Consc.* pt. ii. n. 14. Edit. Ratisbon, 1865. Gury expressly limits the liceity to "*media per se indifferentia*." Mr. Cartwright endeavours to explain that this limitation means little or nothing (p. 170).

This case, as being somewhat extreme, is a favourite with authors who wish to convey an idea as to how far the principle upon which their solution rests will go. It is, in fact, as I have said, the stock instance ; and it is the decisions pronounced regarding it, as indicated above, that have evoked so much obloquy from those who would not or could not understand them in the only sense in which they can reasonably be understood.

There is, however, another example which must not be omitted, affording, as it does, a prime illustration of the method according to which some controversialists can fashion for themselves arguments out of materials the most unpromising.

Amongst the Jesuit theologians called as witnesses by Dr. Littledale and Mr. Cartwright, quite singular importance is attributed to Wagemann, of whom we heard above but whose name will be unfamiliar to many students tolerably well versed in the literature of the schools. Of his book, *Synopsis Theologiæ Moralis*, there seems to be no copy, or at least none accessible, within the British Isles.¹ Yet Dr. Littledale and Mr. Cartwright both quote it, and quote it in such a manner as to suggest that, unless the former has borrowed from the latter, who was first in the field, they have both drawn upon one common source ; while in view of their usual practice in regard of evidence, it might with some confidence be assumed that this source is not the original book. Fortunately, however, it is possible to identify this fountain-head of their information. More fortunately still, it has been possible to consult Wagemann's own work, a copy of which is found in the Royal Library at Munich, with the result that a highly instructive and edifying chapter in the history of literary evolution stands revealed.

Dealing with the question of the morality of human actions, Wagemann writes as follows :

“ *Question.* Is the intention of a good end vitiated by the employment of a bad means ?

¹ It is not found in the Catalogue of the British Museum, nor of the Bodleian, nor of Trinity College, Dublin, nor of Sion College, nor of any other library where I have inquired.

“ *Answer.* I distinguish. If the end be intended with direct reference to a bad means, the action becomes absolutely bad : not so if the end be intended without any reference to the means. For example : Titus steals in order to give an alms out of his theft : and Caius intends to give an alms, thinking nothing at the moment of a means. *Afterwards*, through avarice, he determines to give it out of a theft, which he therefore commits. The *first intention of almsgiving* was good in Caius.”¹

Here, it might seem, we have a mere harmless truism, too obvious to merit utterance ; yet from such a harmless germ has been evolved an immoral paradox shocking and scandalous to all honest men. In this wise—

In 1874 there was published at Celle, in Hanover, a book entitled *Doctrina moralis Jesuitarum*, compiled by an “ Old Catholic ” in a spirit of bitter hostility to the Society of Jesus, as we learn from the preface, dated on the hundredth anniversary of its suppression. In this work are collected a number of extracts from the writing of Jesuits,² frequently mutilated, always shorn of their context, and calculated, as they stand, to create a bad impression. Hence undoubtedly have Dr. Littledale and Mr. Cartwright drawn the information concerning Wagemann, which readers will naturally suppose to have been derived from his own writings. On p. 212 of the *Doctrina* the passage of his which we have already seen, is given in its first stage of transmutation, with a few particulars prefixed concerning the author himself—as follows :

“ LEWIS WAGEMANN : Professor of Moral, in the University of Innspruck : born 1713, died 1792. *Synopsis Theologiæ Moralis*, Augsburg and Innspruck, 1762 : *Permissu Superiorum*. ‘ Is the intention of a good end vitiated by the choice of bad means ? Not if the end be intended without any reference to the means, . . . e.g., Caius intends to give an alms, thinking nothing at the moment of a means : afterwards, through avarice, he determines to give it out of a theft, which he therefore commits.’ ”

¹ *Synopsis*, i. 26. *Apud* Voit, i. 19. The italics are mine.

² In Latin and German.

That is all. The phrase containing the whole point of the solution is quietly burked, and the reader is left to conclude that because Caius did not at first intend to steal, Wagemann pronounces his conduct meritorious after he has stolen.

Next comes Mr. Cartwright. He manifestly betrays his entire dependence upon the information about Wagemann supplied above, though he does what he can by circumlocution and amplification to invest it with an air of originality. In particular he tries to improve upon the material supplied him, finishing off its obviously ragged end into such a point as he conceives it ought to have. Accordingly, he informs us as follows :¹

“ In 1762 the Jesuit Wagemann, Professor of Morals (*sic*) at the University of Innspruck, published a Synopsis of Moral Theology, duly authenticated by official approbation, in which occurs this passage : ‘ Is the intention of a good end rendered vicious by the choice of bad means ? Not if the end itself be intended irrespective of the means : ’ a proposition which he thus exemplifies, ‘ Caius is minded to bestow alms, without at the time taking thought as to the means ; subsequently, from avarice, he elects to give them out of the proceeds of theft, which to that end he consequently commits ; ’ *and so Caius is declared entitled to the merits of charity though he has aggravated the offence of violence by the motive of avarice.* ”

Here is undoubtedly a particularly fine specimen of the maxim we are considering, as exhibited in practice. In order to fasten upon a Jesuit author the stigma of so immoral a doctrine, it is considered right and proper to falsify his words, and so make him say the opposite of what he actually says. Such an end, in the judgement of our rigorous moralists, justifies such means.

We have, however, by no means finished with Wagemann, who is made to supply another example even more remarkable. Going back to the point at which we left him, we find that Mr. Cartwright thus continues :

“ Wagemann is not a doctor who deals in obscure

¹ *The Jesuits*, p. 168. Italics mine.

words, for he says, *Finis determinat probitatem actus* [‘ The end determines the righteousness of the deed ’], a definition of neat preciseness.”

The same neatly precise phrase is fastened upon by Dr. Littledale,¹ who exhibits it as the most terse form in which the doctrine is “ laid down ” that the end justifies the means. It may, in fact, be now considered as the crucial piece of evidence committing Wagemann himself and the Society whose authorities approved his work to the doctrine they would fain repudiate.

Here again, however, it is abundantly clear that the neat and terse proposition to which such supreme importance is attributed, has been supplied, not by Wagemann himself, but by the same hostile writer who was previously requisitioned. But hostile as he is, he is found to utter a note of warning which should have saved our learned friends from the trap in which they have both been caught. The terrible phrase, “ *Finis determinat moralitatem*² *actus*,” occurs only in the *Index* at the end of Wagemann’s book, and accordingly lays down no doctrine whatever, good, bad, or indifferent, but merely refers the reader to the place where the doctrine may be obtained : if we go to that place, this is what we find : 3

“ The goodness or badness of actions is chiefly to be sought under three heads : namely, the *object* [or means], the end, and the circumstances. For an act to be good, it is required that these three should *all* be good : for it to be bad, it is sufficient that *one of them* be bad, according to the principle—*Bonum est ex integra causa, malum ex singulis defectibus*.”

A little further on,⁴ Wagemann writes :

“ All employment of an evil means is evil ; but, on the other hand, it does not follow that all employment of a good means is actually good.”

Such is the evidence which is triumphantly cited as proving beyond question that Jesuits hold the vile

¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Ninth Edition, art. *Jesuits*.

² Not *probitatem*, as Mr. Cartwright and Dr. Littledale have it

³ *Synopsis*, i. 17, 18. *Apud* Voit, i. 12. Italics mine.

⁴ *Ibid.* i. 25. Voit, i. 18.

doctrine imputed to them, and such is the kind of erudition for which Dr. Littledale has found so imposing a vehicle as the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

It is of course manifest, that even the phrase, as it stands in the Index, contains a large measure of truth. The end with which a person acts must always be *one* determinant of his merit, and in a vast number of instances it alone exerts any positive determination for good or evil, the other elements being purely "indifferent."

A homely instance in which the end thus determines the moral quality of the action is given by a German writer.¹ A schoolmaster flogs a boy. If he does so because the boy deserves a flogging, and it is likely to do him good, the master's action is good and praiseworthy. If, on the other hand, he chastise the boy with precisely equal severity, because he has a grudge against one, who, being poor, brings him no present at the New Year or on his birthday, the action is unprincipled and tyrannical. It is its end or motive that determines its morality.

Such are positively *the only grounds* upon which Jesuits are said to hold and teach that "the end justifies the means." Such in particular are the "classical instances" by which, as we are sometimes assured, Dr. Littledale and Mr. Cartwright have put the truth of the allegation beyond dispute.

There are, moreover, some extraneous pieces of evidence that should weigh with every fair-minded inquirer. The most bitter and determined assailants of Jesuits and all concerning them who, having been trained in the methods and terminology of the schools, were well qualified to judge of such a matter, have invariably shown what they thought of this particular charge, by entirely ignoring it. In the seventeenth century, we find no word concerning any such teaching in Pascal's *Provincial Letters*,—and Pascal was not the man to neglect such a weapon had he thought it of any possible value. For how little it counted in the storm of obloquy which in the eighteenth century presaged and facilitated the temporary

¹ Dr. Peter Henn. *Das schwarze Buch*, 173.

destruction of the Society, may be judged from this, that it is not even mentioned as an accusation in Pope Clement XIV.'s Brief of Suppression—that document which some would regard as the last word on the iniquities of Jesuits. In the nineteenth century, who were more fierce anti-Jesuits than Dr. Döllinger and Dr. Reusch, after their revolt against the Church? They specifically and in detail attacked the moral teaching of the Society; but they knew something of what they were talking about, and the idea that any Jesuit ever held or taught that the end justifies immoral means they left severely alone.

So we find an eminent Catholic writer, but no Jesuit—Mr. W. S. Lilly, in his *Claims of Christianity*—treating the whole matter as too absurd for serious discussion, and intimating that the idea we have been considering is a vulgar error which only the ignorant or the dishonest can entertain.

Finally, in the year 1852, the German Jesuit, Father Roh, issued a public challenge, offering to pay the sum of 1,000 Rhenish guilders to any one who, in the judgement of the faculty of law in the University of Heidelberg or of Bonn, should establish the fact that any Jesuit had ever taught the doctrine that the end justifies the means, or any doctrine equivalent to it. The challenge has been before the world for fifty years; but the thousand guilders have never yet been awarded.¹

Count Paul von Hoensbrœch, who after becoming a Jesuit, quarrelled with his superiors and then left both the Order and the Catholic Church, himself speaks of this matter. He tells us further that in April 1903 one of the deputies of the Centre Party, Dasbach, repeated Roh's challenge, increasing the sum to 2,000 florins. "I took Herr Dasbach at his word," writes Hoensbrœch, "published the proofs from Jesuit writings, which appeared to me convincing, in the magazine *Deutschland* (July 1903), edited by myself, and called on the challenger, Herr Dasbach, to pay the 2,000 florins. He refused. The Court of first instance decided the case in Dasbach's favour and Hoensbrœch appealed to a higher tribunal.

¹ See Father Roh's pamphlet, *Das alte Lied: Der Zweck heiligt die Mittel*.

According to the appellant's own statement, the High Court of Appeal at Cologne dismissed the case (March 30th 1905) "on the ground that the passages adduced from Jesuit authors did not contain the sentence 'the end sanctifies the means' either formally or materially."¹

Count von Hoensbrœch was advised by his counsel not to carry the appeal any further, and contents himself with the assertion that the judgement delivered by the Court had been drawn up with the assistance of the Jesuits. But the very quotations from Jesuit moralists adduced by Hoensbrœch in proof of his own contention may confidently be left to the judgement of all fair-minded readers.

Finally we may note that many honest critics who in all good faith have repeated this charge on imperfect evidence, have afterwards upon fuller enquiry withdrawn it unconditionally. Such was the straightforward course adopted quite recently by General Sir Frederick Maurice.

In a letter to the *Liverpool Daily Post* of August 30th, 1919, Sir Frederick wrote: "Loyola taught his followers that the end justifies the means, and Ludendorff and his colleagues in other times and for other purposes adopted the principles of the Jesuits." The statement was at once challenged by the late Father Garrold, who demanded an apology, but was warmly defended by the Rev. W. A. Limbrick, Secretary of the Protestant Reformation Society, who in the *English Churchman* of October 2nd in the same year, implored Sir Frederick not to be "too hasty" in apologising, and proceeded to cite the ex-Jesuit quoted above and an author notoriously anti-Jesuit in support of the allegation. Sir Frederick, however, acted as a gentleman might be expected to do when he has made a charge which has been shown to be inaccurate, and in the *Daily News* of October 23rd published the following letter from which the following is an extract. Having cited the passage in which the charge was made, he continues:

"I wrote this passage with my mind upon Ludendorff rather than upon the Jesuits, and I did not verify my

¹ *Fourteen Years a Jesuit*. (Eng. trans.) II, p. 320.

references, as I should have done. I have now investigated, to the best of my ability, the long controversy which has raged between the Jesuits and their opponents on this question, and I have been unable to find that there is any evidence that Loyola taught his followers that the end justifies the means. I therefore desire to withdraw that statement and to apologise for having made it."

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