

PASS IT ON

ROBERT NASH, S. J.

On the first page of our booklet let me begin by setting down three suppositions.

Nine or ten months ago you and I met in O'Connell Street and you told me you were then about to send your little Mollie, aged six-and-a-half, to Miss Kearie to be taught the piano. We meet again today and I ask you how the child is progressing, only to be informed that she is doing very poorly indeed and that you are inclined to believe that Miss Kearie is incompetent. I express my regret, we shake hands and part company.

BLAME THE DOCTOR

On going into my house I find the telephone ringing. There is an urgent message from my old friend John Smith telling me he has been ill in bed for some weeks and asking me to call round. Yes I shall, of course, and at the first opportunity. So this evening I take the bus that passes by his house and get off at the stop. I sit by his bedside and John proceeds to give me a lengthy and detailed account of his ailment, from the first symptoms seven weeks ago to the amount of sleep he had last night. And what does the doctor think of it all? Oh, the doctor! There's the rub! My old friend assures me he has no confidence in the doctor at all; he is convinced that under another he would be quite cured long ago. It is only since this sickness came his way that stories have reached him which prove conclusively the luckless doctor's lack of skill. Once more. my condolences to poor John, and, as I pick up my hat and gloves and bid him good afternoon, I recommend him to call in another physician.

My third supposition. You are thinking, I'm told, of investing six or seven hundred pounds in some new scheme that is being boosted, and you consult a solicitor about it. He is wise and experienced and a friend of your family to boot. He tells you what to do and you invest your money. But what is my dismay, when, on opening the paper to-morrow morning, I read that the firm is smashed or the scheme collapsed, and your precious hard-earned seven hundred gone with the wind. I write to tell you how genuinely sorry I am, and your reply is a fierce tirade against the solicitor who advised you.

But on further investigation I make some surprising discoveries. I find that the excellent Miss Kearie was wont to insist that for the progress of your child regular and constant practice at the piano was imperative. But little Mollie much prefers to play and romp about after school is over, and with a helpless shrug of the shoulders you tell me that the darling child must have her way. That point is at least debatable, but what is quite certain is that if you thus meekly acquiesce, It is grossly unfair to blame the teacher for Mollie's tardy advancement.

NOT FAIR

I learn that that doctor warned my friend John that he must at all costs lie perfectly still in bed, but John behaves like a charged dynamo. On no account, says doctor, is the patient to eat meat, above all beef or mutton. But John waves the injunction aside and stoutly declares that beef and mutton it must be. Sugar and sugared things are fatal in John's case, declares the medical expert. But your old friend often told you with a wink that he had a sweet tooth, so when doctor's back is turned it is sugar and sweets every time. I'm not wondering any more now why the illness is a long-drawn-out affair, but I certainly feel nothing but indignation at the attack launched against the doctor and his treatment of the case.

And as for your solicitor friend. The fact now comes to light that he did everything in his power to dissuade you from making that investment. He warned you that it was his considered opinion that that company was a swindle and the big dividends offered only a snare for the unwary. But you were pigheaded and you would have, your way. He implored you at least to wait a few months and see how things would pan out. No you turned a deaf ear and rushed into the scheme that looked so alluring. Well to be sure, I'm very very sorry that you are at a loss of seven or eight hundred, especially in these bad times. But do not expect me to sympathise with you when you begin to rail against the man whose advice you refused with such obstinacy to follow.

The Catholic Church is a teacher. For two thousand years she has proclaimed to the ends of the earth that if men will

seek first the kingdom of God and His justice all other things will be added unto them. And for her pains she is laughed out of court.

The Catholic Church is a physician and she makes the emphatic avowal that she holds in her hands remedies that will heal many of the ills that flesh is heir to. For all men she can make their burden lighter though she does not pretend to be able to lift it entirely from their shoulders. For, she avers, this world must remain ever a valley of tears, a period of exile and probation before the homecoming. But her methods of healing are declared to be out-of-date, and her medicines are rudely flung back in her face.

A SAFE INVESTMENT

The Catholic Church maintains that outside her fold there is no salvation. All other investments are not only shaky, but doomed and condemned beforehand. Wherefore let men be wise in time and examine her claims and her promises. If they are outside her pale let them study their position and see if it is tenable, and if they find *it is* not, let them hasten to give to her the obedience which is her due. This is arrogance on her part, you will be told, and sensible men turn on their heel away from her with a contemptuous smile.

On Good Friday, Jesus Christ stood on the balcony of Pilate's palace and looked down at the seething mass of *men* that thronged the street in front. "Away with this Man," they shouted. "We will not have this Man to rule over us." And for two thousand years the cry has been sending its echo into the world. Christ continues to live in His Church, to teach with her voice, to advance standards of value and rules of conduct that are diametrically opposed to those of the world. And the world continues to shout: "Away with this Church that curbs our freedom! Away with her denunciation of sin! Away with her dogmas that fetter and restrain! Crucify her! Crucify her!"

YOU CATHOLICS

In view of all this it is easy to fathom the profound wisdom in a remark made some time ago by a young Communist. He told a Catholic friend of mine: "You Catholics have been running the world for two thousand years and you've made a bad mess of it. It's about time you cleared out and gave us a chance." Running the world—when for two thousand years the world has consistently spurned the church's teaching! Running the world—when the Holy Father is excluded from the world's conferences and his appeals ignored! If the world is in a mess the reason is, not that she has tried out the Church's remedies and found them wanting. Rather, has, she attacked the Church by fire and sword, by specious lies, by laughter and by ridicule, simply because the Ten Commandments and the Counsels could never be made to tally with the self indulgent, sin-loving gospel of the world. Hence the Church's solutions of men's problems are humped overboard, and when chaos results the same world turns complacently to Pope and Church and complains: "see what a mess *you* have made of things!" I hope our Communist friend has a sense of humour.

When St. John the Baptist was preaching at the Jordan bank, the priests and levites came out to see him and to ask him: "Who are thou?... What sayest thou of thyself?" It is proposed in this booklet to put the same question to the Catholic Church and listen to her answer. What does she claim to be and what reasons has she for making these claims? She is charged with, being intolerant, with the scandalous lives of many of her children, with love of show and pride and grasping for money. What has she to say by way of answer? "What sayest thou of thyself?"

PASS IT ON

It will be useful to enquire thus for those outside her fold and it is hoped that this booklet may fall into their hands. In fact, it just occurs to my mind that you, dear reader, could take a hint from the title and perhaps pass this pamphlet on when you have finished with it yourself. For it is the Church's great joy to answer every earnest enquiry. She is only too glad to tell the world the why and the wherefore of every doctrine taught to her children. Catholics do not believe merely because they must follow with a sort of blind instinct the guidance of their Church as though religion could be reduced to a game of blind man's bluff. It is quite true that there are many Catholics whose faith is simple and they are satisfied to

submit unquestioningly to whatever the Church tells them to do or to believe. But before we end it will be very clear, we hope that every Catholic has the right to understand the reasonableness of his faith.

Indeed the Church encourages her children to investigate thus and it is her proud boast that every single argument against her is answerable; and has been answered in a manner calculated to convince a fair-minded questioner. She has no fear from argument, rather does she welcome it. Her grievance today as Mgr. Fulton Sheen points out, 'is rather that she can discover as few adversaries worthy of her steel. She is far indeed from feeling resentment if you question her for she has within her the immovable conviction that her doctrine is divine. Christ, her Founder, the Son of God, has entrusted to her His teaching, and, with it the commission to pass it on to all subsequent generations.

So the thoughts jotted down here may be useful to non-Catholics, but not to them only. We ourselves, as Catholics, need to keep constantly reminding ourselves of the truly magnificent treasure we possess in our Catholic Faith. There is a real danger that we take it all too much for granted, and the complaints about our apathy and indifference are by no means without foundation. The trouble is that we do not give ourselves time to think and to realise what a heritage is ours. Nor does this surprise one, for the great aim and object of our world is to prevent men from having opportunity or inclination to think, or to think on right lines. Radio, cinema, illustrated paper—all these are ready, standing by, and waiting to do our thinking for us. There is no room left, or very little, for the soul—satisfying truths of our faith to absorb our minds, to sink in and become in our lives the dynamic forces that they ought to be.

CLEANING THE WINDOW

When the window is clouded over, you can distinguish the beauties of nature outside only with great difficulty. But polish that pane thoroughly and now look again. What a transformation! There before you is the wide expanse of ocean, the yachts with their white sails dotting the surface, the sea gulls, the clear blue sky over-head. Of course you knew all the time that these things were there, but because the window was dull and clouded you were not able to see them. It is good to clean too the windows which open out on the beauties of the supernatural. It is good to look and to realise, not merely to give to truth a dry intellectual assent of the mind. It is good to shut off your radio, to turn away your mind from the thought of the film stars and the make-believe of Hollywood, to throw aside your light novel or illustrated weekly, and give yourself a chance of hearing the Church's answer when you face her with the question: "What sayest thou of thyself?"

It is good, because such an attitude is bound to make you realise the solid structure upon which your faith rests, the beauty of it all, the challenge to you to live it more fully than you have been doing. Is not this realisation the crying need amongst us today?

DOES IT SINK IN?

Not so long ago I heard a profoundly moving and inspiring series of sermons. The Church was packed to the doors and the audience listened with reverent and rapt attention. So far so good. But as they filed out of the Church one could hardly help wondering how much of that sublime teaching would sink in and become part and parcel of their lives. For no sooner were they outside than cigarettes were lighted and chatter began about the trivialities of everyday life. The seed had indeed been cast upon the ground but was it going to take root? What practical difference in their daily lives was that series of talks going to, make? Undoubtedly it did much to uplift, but it is beyond question that its effects would have been immeasurably deeper and more lasting if men would afterwards sit back and think and pray and realise.

So the object of these pages is to deepen that spirit of faith by reminding ourselves of the why and the wherefore of what we believe. We shall put forward arguments that may be easily grasped by the man in the street, so do not be afraid that you are going to be rowed far out into deep theological waters. Our task will be, not so much to put the full case for the Catholic Church before you—which would obviously be impossible in a booklet of this size. Rather, we shall try to open up avenues of thought and indicate lines of argument which will help to instil into yourself a pride in your faith and show you the attitude to take up if you hear attacks made on your Church or if you are asked questions concerning her teaching.

“WHAT SAYEST THOU”

“What. sayest thou of thyself?” What then is the claim of the Catholic Church? She stands before the world to-day, as she has done for these two thousand years, and she tells all men that Jesus Christ is God, the real Son of God, and that she and she alone has been commissioned by Him to teach all nations. Other forms of Christianity have preserved part, but only part, of that definite body of truth left behind by Christ at the end of His life. At different times they have broken away from her unity and taken with them a section of her doctrine. They have picked and chosen and have rejected portions of the original teaching of Jesus Christ. They are thus man-made, whereas she is divine, and the result is the truly lamentable spectacle we witness today, that they are fast falling to pieces, Every day it is becoming more evident that non-Catholic forms of Christianity are failing to hold the allegiance of their followers, and with deep regret one listens to the reiterated complaints about the empty pews.

Jesus taught, not vague generalities, but a very definite code of laws to be obeyed and a very definite body of truths to be believed. He did not tell His followers that He was just giving them His views for what they were worth; His command, on the contrary, is to teach exactly what He has taught, “all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” And to this teaching He attaches a most weighty sanction: “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be condemned.” His doctrine is of such vital importance that any other course is utterly unthinkable. He could not, for instance, leave men free to believe or not to believe in eternal punishment, in the forgiveness of sin, in the necessity of Baptism, in the indissoluble nature of marriage. These things involve issues of such overwhelming weight that His teaching about them had to be clear-cut and accurate.

The Catholic Church maintains that it is, that to her keeping He entrusted it, and that to her and to her alone He gave the mandate, to tell it to the world.

It is to be noted that Our Lord says nothing to His Church about committing His doctrine to writing. His order is to *preach* it, to pass it on by the living voice to all nations. The book containing portion of His teaching was not completed till many years after His death; what then would have become of the, first Christians if they could find His teaching only from a source which was not yet existing? Given His obvious anxiety that men should know and understand what He had come to tell them it would be astounding if He intended them to discover this only within the pages of a book, and at the same time took no trouble to see to it that that book was written.

A LIVING TEACHER

Yet there are to be found Christians who profess to be able to learn for themselves all that Our Lord taught by studying the gospels. Catholics ask logically why then He never instructed His apostles to write. How does a father behave when he wants to have his child educated? He sends him to a living teacher. What would you think of a parent who would take his child by the hand, lead him into the library and explain to him that he has here at his disposal all the books he requires to equip his mind? The child looks blankly at those shelves and sees that the father’s idea is ludicrous. The child will never learn unless someone explains to him the meaning of those letters and the idioms of those languages.

Could it be possible that in the discovery of the most important truths of all Our Lord would leave you and me to wade through the pages of a book “in which,” says St. Peter, “are contained things hard to be understood which the unlearned and unstable wrest, to their own destruction?” Is this the only source from which to draw forth truths which are necessary for our eternal salvation? The idea is unthinkable. No. Our Lord instituted a living teacher who, with living voice would *preach* His gospel down through the centuries.

This does not by any means imply that the Catholic is wanting in respect for the Bible. Far from it. It is part of his faith that that Word is divinely-inspired that it has God for its author, that God guided the writer as he committed to writing what God wished *to* be so committed. But these difficult writings need competent authority to interpret them. Modern forms of Christianity, in a pitiable attempt to hold their members together, put as the central principle of all religion the comfortable Reformation theory of private judgment. In flagrant contradiction to Christ they declare that it really does not matter very much what interpretation you give His teaching. ‘Modern Protestantism clamours for “good works” and

attaches little or no importance to what you believe. What a swing of the pendulum this is! For in the sixteenth century the slogan was that what you *did* counted for nothing, provided only your belief was firm. The supposedly same sect teaching two directly opposing doctrines!

CHAOS AND CONTRADICTION

A Protestant of to-day may attend service in any one of three or four hundred churches and listen to as many preachers expounding as many contradictory teachings from their pulpits. All, forsooth, are labourers in the vineyard of the Lord! But is it conceivable that Our Lord could allow men to flounder about in such hopeless confusion concerning questions that affect their eternal salvation? I, a Catholic, maintain that Our Lord is really present in the Blessed Eucharist. You, a non-Catholic, prefer to hold that His words are to be taken in a figurative sense. You prefer, notice! As if it were or could possibly be, a matter of choice! A Catholic holds that sins are to be confessed to a priest, but the idea of kneeling thus to a fellow-man does no appeal to you, a non-Catholic. You consider that Christ could never have meant that.

You *consider*; it does not *appeal*,— so that then is the criterion of right and wrong? But who is to decide for you? Can it possibly be a matter of mere conjecture? “Why bother?” asks your Protestant friend blandly, “let’s each go our own way and shake hands on It.” But which is Christ’s way? What did He lay down as the objective truth? Talk of this kind does not make sense and the Catholic must very resolutely and logically refuse to take the proffered hand.

Let me insist that these hard sayings are set down in no cynical or aggressive frame of mind. The Catholic is honestly puzzled and mystified to understand how reasonable men can blink at the problems they raise.

To the Catholic the solution seems evident—these sad contradictions are the consequences that follow when men take it upon themselves to tamper with the teaching deposited by Christ in His Church. This babel of voices has arisen because men have refused to listen to the living teacher to whom alone the divine Master gave authority to teach in His name. There must be confusion and harrowing doubts when men cannot tell with absolute certainty just exactly what Our Lord meant and they cannot tell because they have severed themselves from the one Church which alone has inherited the full body of His doctrine and the command from Him to pass it on to subsequent generations.

SUCH INTOLERANCE!

From what we have been saying it is easy to the charge of intolerance which is frequently brought up against the Church. Suppose you have been walking every day for a month along the road leading into a certain town. What is going to happen if I try to tell you that that road does not lead into that town but into some other? Why, you *know* it does. Haven’t you walked it yourself twenty times and proved to yourself where it leads? What will you say to me if I attempt to persuade you that sugar gives your cup of tea a bitter taste? Or that the world is flat or the moon made of green cheese or that it is only your imagination that thinks the rain is falling outside, or the sun shining in the sky?

If you take me seriously at all you will retort by telling me that I am talking nonsense. Why, *you know by experience* what the truth is. You will probably grow impatient if I persist in my arguing. You are called to the phone and you tell me you know it is Jim or Mary at the other end, because you have listened to their voice. You say you could not possibly doubt who has just turned that corner, for you saw it was Jane or Tom. You are quite certain that this letter handed to you by the postman is from Harry or Joe or Alice or Dan for you recognise at once the postmark and the writing on the envelope. You are intolerant of questioning or contradiction in these cases because your evidence is incontestable.

NO COMPROMISE

The Catholic Church is intolerant for precisely the same reason. It is sheer nonsense to speak, as some times men do speak, about modernising the divine message. Truth is eternal, and the Church may no more compromise herself by teaching just exactly what she has been told to teach, or by ceasing to teach it, than she may affirm that Julius Caesar is President today in the United States or that Dublin is the capital of Soviet Russia. This sounds fantastic, but it would be just as ridiculous for the Church, to change her teaching on, say, marriage, or hell, or eternal punishment or divorce, or the

Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. She cannot be tolerant where dogma is concerned for truth is objective. She knows what Jesus taught about these things for she is His creation. Like St. John she knows that His testimony is true, and she passes on to the world that which she has heard with her ears and seen with her eyes and handled with her hands, for Jesus has spoken to her and told her just. exactly what to say and how to say it.

It is her claim that she has preserved Christ's precious deposit of faith from all the corrupting influences that have assailed it throughout the centuries. Her contention is based on Our Lord's promise that the gates of hell will never prevail against her, and on His assurance that He will shield her from error when she speaks to men as His divine mouthpiece. Knowing this promise and leaning upon it, I ask you how can she be otherwise than intolerant of any who try to gainsay her?

QUOTING FATHER LORD, S.J.

At the same time we have to keep in mind that the Church uses every possible human means to guard herself against making a mistake. "The Church which speaks with the voice of Christ has taught truth for twenty centuries without one mistake, without one necessity for admitting an error, without one withdrawal from a position firmly taken, without a single false teaching to which the accusing finger of its enemies can point in scorn Show me one other institution in the world that has done the same and I will pay it the homage of my soul. . . . My Church goes on, quietly repeating the words of Christ, teaching without the need of denying its own teaching, facing each new problem with absolute surety. My faith is built upon a rock and upon the unfailing promise of Jesus Christ."

How has this remarkable feat been achieved? First of all through the fidelity of Christ to His promise that He would always be with his Church, and that He would send upon her His Holy Spirit to preserve her immune from error, — "to lead you into all truth," "to bring all things to your minds whatsoever I have told you."

But there is something else. There is the extreme caution of the Church in examining every side of a question before coming to a decision. Father Brodrick, S.J in his "Life St. Peter Canisius", illustrates this by telling us of the care with which the Council of Trent discussed one single point of doctrine. On this one point alone the Council held sixty-one General Congregations and forty- four others each occupying from three to six hours. Three different drafts on the point were drawn up, discussed word by word with most painstaking scrutiny, and then, at the end of all this they were finally rejected!

Confidence in her teaching? Even if she never claimed the infallible guidance of God, would it be very rash to trust the decisions of a Church that goes to such extraordinary lengths to safeguard herself against error?

A NON-CATHOLIC ASKS

I am reminded here too, of the non-Catholic who complained to a Catholic friend about the canonisation of saints. How could the Catholic Church be sure when declaring that a man was now actually in heaven, and had practised heroic virtue on earth? By way of answering, the Catholic gave to his non-Catholic enquirer a full printed account of the deliberations and discussions that had arisen in connection with a proposed candidate for canonisation. Some days later the non-Catholic returned smiling with satisfaction. "If your Church takes all that much trouble I have no more to say." "You are satisfied, then, that this man was worthy of canonisation?" "Well, you are more easy to convince than the congregation at Rome, for the account I gave you is that of a man whose cause was turned down!"

In view of all this we can understand the calm certitude with which the Catholic Church states her claim:

"I know the truth because Jesus Christ, the Son of God has entrusted it to me and His holy Spirit directs me and preserves me from the possibility of making a mistake when I define what my sons and daughters are to believe or to do. I am conscious of this to myself and I can provide it to any reasonable man. Moreover, there is no institution on earth which takes the same care as I do before coming to a decision. Learned men and saintly men examine every conceivable aspect of every question proposed to me, and only slowly, very slowly indeed, and after immense labour and prayer do I come to a decision."

“What sayest thou of thyself?” This, briefly, is the Church’s answer.

Do not tell me such a Church is credulous. Divine though she be, she still uses every human means to protect herself from taint of error. You may trust her, there fore, don’t you think?

GOD DOESN’T

“Your Church is behind the times,” said an American tourist to an old man in the west of Ireland. “We are living in an age of progress. Look at this grand motor of mine—sixty years ago who could have thought of travelling in such ease and with such speed? Look at the radio and cinema and see what they have done to develop entertainment and instruction. There is the telephone—who knew anything about it a hundred years ago? This is a go-ahead age and take it from me, your Church will have to get moving too. Her teaching is out of date, and won’t suit the modern mind, and if she wants to hold her followers, she’ll have to change. They won’t stand for what men were ready to accept in the past.”

And the old man, slowly taking the clay pipe from his mouth, made answer: “Yes, sir, there is some truth in what you say. I’m living here now for over sixty years and I’ve seen many a change in my day. But during all those years I’ve also observed that the seasons of the year follow each other in exactly the same order. The sun rises and sets in just the same way. The sea comes in and goes out with the very same regularity. And I’ve come to the conclusion that what is human is indeed subject to change, but God’s own handiwork remains unaltered.”

DEVELOPMENT OF DOGMA

The mention of Mary’s Immaculate Conception a few pages back brings to my mind a possible objection. In 1854 the Catholic Church solemnly defined this dogma in the following majestic language: By the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul and Ours, we declare, pronounce, and define, that the doctrine which maintains that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of her Conception was, by a singular grace and privilege of God, preserved free from all stain of original sin, is revealed by God and therefore firmly and for ever to be believed by all the faithful. Wherefore if any presume (which God avert), to believe in their heart differently from what has been defined by Us, let them know... that their faith has suffered shipwreck, and that they have severed themselves from the unity of the Church. . . .”

Now here arises a difficulty. Before this definition a Catholic was free to accept or reject as he pleased the doctrine of Mary’s Immaculate Conception. Today he stands condemned, branded as a heretic, if he dares to believe even in his heart that the Immaculate Conception is untrue. Does this not argue to a change in the Church’s teaching?

The Church is a living organism and all life manifests itself by growth. Growth is only the bringing to light of what was there already in germ as the great oak is in the acorn. In just the same way the Church explores, as occasion demands, into the content of the “deposit of faith” left her by her divine Founder. After careful examination she finds that Scripture and Tradition warrant her in declaring that such and such a dogma has been implicitly believed all the time and contained in her teaching. Her definition does no more than clarify the issue and make binding on her children the result of her findings. Thus there is no new dogma added, no change in her teaching, only a declaration that (in the instance given) the Immaculate Conception was all along contained in her deposit,— though not explicitly adverted to—and now that on investigation she has found this to be so, her children are no longer free to believe or not to believe.

A PORTRAIT GALLERY

Thus far our task, in the main, has been to state the position which the Catholic Church claims for herself in the world. Now comes the all-important question: Is this claim of hers true or only an arrogant boast?

In every age the most brilliant intellects have faced that question. Often they tackled it in a prejudiced and hostile attitude. They proceeded to place under the microscope every jot and tittle of the case for Catholicism with the object of proving to the world that her claims were nonsense. Very often they had, from a worldly standpoint, nothing to gain and everything to lose, by entering the Catholic Church.

Now when men of mightiest intellects examine the arguments for Catholicism in such a biased frame of mind; when they set out with the hope of being able to overthrow those arguments; when they have no other idea in their minds than this in putting their questions to her; when for them the road to Rome bristles with difficulties,—loss of friends and loved associations, not seldom of the very means of livelihood; and when with all that they ultimately submit to the teaching of the Church with the simplicity of little children, I think it must be admitted that the step they take deserves our most careful and respectful consideration.

A HUNDRED YEARS

It will repay us to make a visit to a portrait gallery of famous converts, for, say, the past hundred years. A hundred years ago the Catholics of England, persecuted for three centuries, had dwindled to an insignificant minority. Then the revival began, and where? In Oxford, the home of learning and of reason, the sanctuary and centre of England's culture. The brightest intellectual luminary that shone in that firmament—possibly in any firmament—was John Henry Newman. A deeply religious man, passionately attached to the Church in which he was born, Newman at first opposed the new movement Romewards. But after much harassing doubts and many heartaches, after prolonged examination and prayer, this genius of all times made his great act of faith. Why? Because he saw perfectly clearly that it was reasonable.

To quote Mr. de Blacam: "Loving the lofty Anglican culture and especially its sanctuary at Oxford, where the ancient walls and quadrangles are a kind of stone built, oak-girded city of the soul, Newman went out of it sorrowing, because his reason told him he must. These things he loved but he could not enjoy them unless he was willing to remain apart from the living unity of the Church. So he made his decision."

Twenty years later this master of English prose gave to the world his "Apologia" explaining the steps which had logically led him to make this momentous change, a change in which sentiment fought hard against reason and reason came forth victorious.

SUCH A PRICE!

About the same period you have the Anglican vicar, George Spencer. His reason showed him the logic and common sense of the Catholic position, but what a sacrifice, or rather what a whole series of sacrifices, he must make if he is going to be consistent! There is the complete upset to the family he loved and in which he was an idol—"so deep an affliction to my dear father and mother," wrote his sister, "so great a breaking-up of our family, so painful a loss at Althrop, that it weighs us all down . . . altogether a bad business."

Nor was this all. Spencer, on becoming a Catholic, had to give up his comfortable living at Great Brington. He wrote to his bishop to tell him, and said with a smile as he closed the envelope: "There goes £3,000 a year!" He would accept this sacrifice, he would seem to be ready to face indeed any sacrifice, he would be the unwilling cause of making to bleed the hearts of all he loved most on this earth—why? Because as a reasonable man he saw, on investigation, that the claims of the Catholic Church rested on evidence that was unassailable.

In our own day you have Chesterton, pillar of orthodoxy, laughingly showing to those outside the fold the absurdity of their position. You have Arnold Lunn who began his examination of the Church's claims in order, to overthrow them, and ended by writing magnificent defenses of her—nor is his doughty pen yet dry. You have Dr. Orchard, zealous and beloved Evangelical clergyman, to whom all of his communion turned for light and guidance; trusted, consulted, respected everywhere as a tower of learning and a sincere and able exponent of truth. All these roots he tore up and became a Catholic because he saw that the Church had reason on her side.

OTHER CONVERTS

In America you have Heywood Broun, prophet of communism, an outstanding labour leader, spending at one period practically his entire salary of £7,000 a year on Communistic propaganda, and at the same time scarcely allowing himself the luxury of a new suit. Gradually the light began to dawn. Little by little reason showed him that communism was a

myth and Catholicism truth, and, sincere man that he was, he made the sacrifice that logically followed. His conversion struck Americans like a thunderbolt.

Now there would be nothing easier than to keep on pointing out to you, one after another these portrait of distinguished men, in every walk of life, who have made their submission to Rome. I might remind you of Niels Adenson, of Dr. Wu, one of China's greatest scholars, and of a whole host of others like them, who in this our own age, and in every age, have accepted Catholicism because they saw how reasonable it is. You need no Daniel to come to judgment and impress upon you that they are splendid advertisements, and at least persuasive arguments, for the faith they profess.

And lest it be said that the argument cuts both ways and that this stream of converts is balanced or perhaps even out-balanced by the defections from the Faith let me quote the saying of Lord John Russell, no friend assuredly of the Catholic Church: "While the Church of England loses some of her fairest flowers to Rome all we get in return, are the weeds which the Pope throws over his back-garden wall!"

APOSTATES

The Catholic reads with grief of Martin Luther, the apostate monk, who repudiated the solemn obligations of the religious state, which he had voluntarily accepted, but if the Protestant Church is proud of Luther, no Catholic is going to feel envious. Henry VIII broke away from Catholic unity and founded a sect of his own because the Pope refused to sanction his divorce. It is matter for regret that a man who once earned from the Pope the proud title of "Defender of the Faith" should fall so low. But if Protestantism wishes to enthrone such a man as its lord and master, the Catholic can feel for Protestantism nothing but sorrow

Men have left the Church for many reasons—specious or real. The Catholic Church is too strict or too lax, she is out of date or she is introducing novelties, she speaks out too much or she refuses to speak when speech is imperative. But no man has ever yet left the Church on the plea that her doctrine was not holy and calculated to make him holy.

If I hear an apostate son or daughter declaring they have doubts about the faith, I find it hard to keep myself from suspecting that the root of the trouble is, not faith but morals. Let the Church but change her definition of sin and what an influx there would be of returning prodigals! If I read a particularly virulent attack on the Church by a lapsed Catholic I confess to having an uneasy fear lest his pen, thus dripping with vitriol may be designed as a rapier thrust of revenge. "Faith," it has been well said, "cannot be lost or mislaid or stolen; it can only be wilfully bartered away."

IT IS NOT LAWFUL

On an earlier page we mentioned St. John Baptist.

You remember how he died? He stood before the incestuous Herod and told him in manly and fearless language: "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." This is surely tactless and disconcerting more than that, it is the height of bad taste to introduce this discordant note into this very pleasant company and you know that John paid for his outspokenness with his head.

The Church today takes very much the same stand. She is intolerant of smooth-faced and smug hypocrisy and she insists on calling sin by its right name. Here is a Catholic girl who wants to marry a non-Catholic. If the Church consents to consider the question of dispensation at all, she will do so only on her own terms.

Unless the girl abide by these she is cut off forthwith from the Church's communion. Here is a married man who is unhappy with his wife but considers that all would be well if he could leave her and take this second woman who has captured his affections. "No, says the Church, "to do that is a mortal sin. It is forbidden by the laws left in my keeping by Jesus Christ. Therefore for no power on earth can I consent to your state divorce."

SIN AND THE SINNER

If this attitude seems cruel remember that the Church is the divinely-constituted custodian of God's Law. As such she knows what is according to that Law and what is forbidden. If men laugh at her, she likes to recall that they jeered at Jesus

Christ on Calvary. If they try to silence her she is glad to think that they beheaded the Baptist. It is indeed most true that she has all her divine Founder's love for sinners. She will plead, she will argue, she will threaten—all with the object of saving sinners from sin. Even if they turn a deaf ear to her warnings and fall into the mire, she is the first to step forward and help them to their feet. But while she is full of mercy for the repentant sinner she is inexorable in maintaining her attitude towards his sin. Here she never will compromise for the simple reason that she has not the power to do so.

The Catholic is genuinely sorry for the fallen Catholic, for he knows or can guess at the misery he must feel in his moments of sanity. When he looks up with love in his eyes into the face of his Mother the Church, when he sees the limpid purity of her doctrine, when he tastes the blessed sweetness poured into his soul through her Sacraments, when he has come to respect the divine authority she wields and the sureness and definiteness with which she tells him what is right and what is wrong—how can he feel anything in his heart but an immense gratitude to God for the gift of the true faith? And when he looks the other way and sees the height from which the lapsed Catholic has fallen; when he sees non-Catholics, often excellent men, apparently through no fault of their own deprived of all these blessings; bewildered in the midst of a multiplicity of contradictions; devoid of any authoritative teachers; at this present moment, as would seem, about to lose even the few remnants so far preserved of the doctrine of Christ—can he be cynical or harsh towards these? Rather, does not his heart burn within him with the longing to share with them the priceless gifts so lavishly poured out upon himself?

IS THIS ARROGANCE?

“All we receive in return are the weeds which the *Pope* throws over his back-garden wall.” “There is something that would be comical if it were not so tragic, in the lax Catholic or apostate who pretends to take himself seriously. To listen to such a one voicing his opinion and bringing forward his petty arguments, to watch him pitting his intelligence against the most brilliant intellects of all time, to see him expecting men of this type to stand by with hands joined and heads meekly bowed while he moistens his lips and proceeds to expound for their enlightenment his half-baked theories or flimsy objections—this is what you and I call an arrogance and a self-esteem well-nigh insufferable. In saying this we have no quarrel with the sincere man who sees an objection, or a whole host of objections and is really concerned to find the answer. We have rather in mind this self-constituted court enquiry looking with disdain on the Church's splendid line of defenders and expecting them, in his august presence, to hold their breath or apologise for their existence.

It is this ridiculous turkey-cock attitude that would provoke our mirth if we did not feel compelled to suspect that the pose is only a cloak to conceal some secret vice. May we hope the wearer has still left in him the decency to be ashamed of what he knows to be hidden underneath?

Yes there are honest enquirers. There are those who through no fault of their own, are tempted against the faith. I knew one grand old man of this type, a priest, and to the end of his long life he never ceased harping on the glory we give to God when we submit to what we cannot understand, because God has revealed it. The truth was that that old man had all his life been struggling against temptations in matters of faith himself, and the temptation had served only to deepen the faith in him. “There are still unsolved difficulties,” writes Mr. Arnold Lunn, “to which I have yet to find a satisfactory answer, but I have discovered a key which unlocks nine locks out of ten, and it is not the fault of the key but of my wrist that the tenth proves rather sticky.”

LOSING THE FAITH

No Catholic with temptations or difficulties of this sort need be unduly alarmed, provided he uses the means known to him of safeguarding his treasure. Normally no instructed Catholic loses the faith except through his own fault, and that is why, I suppose, the author quoted a few pages back, says that faith is never lost but “wilfully bartered away.” You will always be able to discover a culpable reason for the lapsed Catholic if he has enough honesty left to admit it. He is careless about his reading or his amusements and he exposes his faith to the dangers of an uncongenial atmosphere. Or, through laziness or human respect, he gives up the practice of his religion and the faith in him dies from sheer lack of

nourishment.

Coming back now to our portrait gallery, perhaps you will tell me that you know many excellent men and women, sincere upright Protestants, who never seem to have shown a desire for a place in this gallery nor any qualms of conscience about the truth of their religious beliefs. In other words, that while many have been convinced, many too have lived and died intellectually unconvinced. If the faith is built upon such cogent arguments why do these not satisfy, not some merely, but all honest enquirers?

No. Not all who seek would seem to find. When a man has studied the Catholic Religion, when he has carefully marshalled all the facts, listened to the answers to all his objections, and seen the reasons why Catholics believe, he has not yet received everything necessary for him to take the decisive step. Very often prejudices begotten of education or environment make it morally impossible for him to see the truth without a very special influx of God's grace. "You approach the Church in the way of reason" wrote Newman "You enter it in the light of the spirit." Thus he can accept Catholicism only if God, in His mercy, freely enlightens the man's intellect and moves his will.

Now God is not bound to give this special grace. "The Spirit breathes where it wills." Consequently if we are pressed further and asked why He gives this to one and withholds it from another, our answer is that that *is* God's secret and we must bow with reverence to His ruling. But as apostolically-minded Catholics we can do more. We can go down on our knees and pray for those on the threshold of the Church, and beg that to them the Father of light would give the gift of faith.

THEY TO WHOM IT IS GIVEN

It is also true that "God wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth," No man of goodwill is lost except through his own fault. He can be invisibly united with Christ by grace and can certainly come to see the face of God in heaven. Of this gift of faith then, we may say what Our Lord said in another context: "Not all they take this word but they to whom it is given." It has to be "given" freely by God, and if in an individual case it is withheld it is for us to refrain from prying into God's secret designs. "A saintly life," writes Karl Adam, "is possible—so Catholics believe—even in definitely non-Catholic communions.

NO SOLID ARGUMENT

More frequently, however, you will find that the man himself is at fault. Submission to the Catholic Church often entails immense sacrifices and violent struggles, and the Catholic can only dimly guess at the anguish they cause. Here is a non-Catholic clergyman who begins to feel uneasy about the logic of his position. But suppose he studies the Catholic claim, and suppose it was found to be true? I can well imagine the torture the mere possibility would give him. He has a wife and family whom he loves much; what is going to become of them, depending as they are on his salary, 'If he "goes over to Rome"?' Here is a man who for twenty-five years has been hailed as a champion defender of Protestantism and a bigoted opponent of everything Catholic. What a wound it must be to his pride to have to confess before the world that all the time he was quite wrong! We are not for a moment admitting that these excuses are valid. Once a man is convinced, no earthly consideration should be allowed to jeopardise his eternal salvation. Not valid but very human, and they make it easier to understand why a man quails before the decision and keeps putting it off, or perhaps never faces up to it at all.

Here is a passage from a convert which illustrates the agony which conversion often entails: "In common with so many converts I felt my soul a very battlefield; truth was urging me forward while falsehood was forcing me backward; my conscience was counselling me to seize the substance while my weak nature was all for retaining the shadow; there resulted at this stage of my moral awakening a period of well-nigh intolerable agony. Yet the grace of God, of which I was then quite unaware, gave me a determination to hazard everything for the sake of truth."

It is in place here to notice that even Our Lord Himself did not succeed in convincing everybody. You would imagine that the evidence of His stupendous miracles was so overwhelming that it must have broken down the most determined opposition. But actually what happens?

Let one incident from St. John serve as an illustration. Our Lord had just performed the astonishing miracle of raising from the dead Lazarus, who had been four days in the tomb. The evangelist gives a most graphic and detailed account, and then shows us the effect on Christ's enemies. Did they relent or consider remotely the question of conversion? Not a bit of it! "What do we do, for this Man doth many miracles? If we let Him alone all will believe in Him." It is a most glaring instance of the perversity of the human will. Jesus offers His proofs and His arguments, and the Church He founded offers them too, but coerce the free will of man—that is what even God Himself will never do.

A TYPICAL CASE

We can thus build up a very persuasive argument for our faith by reading the history of the converts to the Church. To set forth more fully actual proofs which the Church advances when asked to vindicate her position would take us beyond the limits of this little book. For you will remember our object, stated in the beginning, was not so much to give exhaustive proofs as to open up lines of thought, which, if pursued lead us to a recognition of the common sense of Catholicism. All to the good if we are thus induced to explore farther afield! It may be useful, as an example, showing the solidity of the foundations of our faith, to take one dogma and just indicate the reasons why it is taught in the Church.

As Catholics we believe that Jesus Christ is really, truly, and substantially present in the Blessed Eucharist.

Over this dogma the Church stands with all the weight of her divine authority and insists that this, and this only, is the correct interpretation of Our Lord's words. Why? She takes into her hands the Gospels and begins by proving to you that they are a historically-reliable and divinely-inspired document. This we must take for granted for the moment, not because cogent proofs are wanting, but because we have not space for them. The Gospels, therefore, are to be believed as God's Word.

REAL PRESENCE

Now what have they to say about the Real Presence? In the sixth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John Our Lord made a statement which astounded His followers. "The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. . . . My flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in Me and I in him."

Taking these words in their obvious sense you would say that Our Lord intended them to be understood literally, and for many centuries nobody ever thought of giving them any other interpretation. It is clear, too, that the Jews who first heard them understood them as a promise that He would give them, quite literally, His body to eat and His blood to drink. The idea seemed revolting, this was "a hard saying"; on the faith of many of them it was too severe a test, so that "after that many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him."

Now is it conceivable that Our Lord would have permitted them to turn away from Him thus if they had misunderstood His words? He knew well why they went away; if they are mistaken He will surely call them back and correct their mistake. Actually, what does He do? He turns to His own twelve and puts to them a question: "Will you also go away?" As though He would say: "It is incumbent upon you, you wish to be My disciples, to accept literally what I have just said. Rather than withdraw My words, I will allow even you to depart."

LAST SUPPER

The promise is fulfilled at the Last Supper, the history of which is well known. "This is My Body; this is My Blood." The apostles who sat listening and watching were simple-minded- men, inclined to take everything they heard in a literal sense. Our Lord had experienced this before now, and more than once He had to correct the wrong impression formed by a literal interpretation of His words. He knew that here also at the Supper Table they would understand Him in the literal sense, but this time He takes no trouble to disabuse them—neither this time, nor after the Resurrection, a course of action on His part that would be utterly unthinkable if they had misunderstood.

Thus carefully does the Church seek in her treasure house and bring forth solid argument for every tenet of her faith.

We have, of course, merely indicated the line of reasoning, and concerning only one dogma, but any other truth of our holy faith might be shown to rest on similar reasonable foundations. She tells you with divine authority that you are bound to confess your sins, and that a valid absolution takes them away; but she is also most anxious that you should know why. She forbids divorce, but she does so in no autocratic or arbitrary manner, but only because she knows well the divine authority behind her prohibition.

She preaches the divinity of Christ, the divine maternity and virginity of Mary, the Communion of Saints, the Infallibility of the Pope. In all her teaching you recognise the same ring of conviction. But it is at the same time most true that she is no wild enthusiast carried away by mere emotion. She loves Jesus Christ; indeed, her life is the very prolongation of His life. She burns with the desire that all men should know Him as she knows Him, and in the effort to make Him known and loved she will spend every ounce of her energy. But all this zeal in His cause rests upon the solid and abiding foundation of a faith in His teaching that is pre-eminently reasonable.

THINK IT OUT

If Catholics are apathetic and non-Catholics unconvinced, the blame for this may not be laid at the Church's door. The main trouble is that we do not think, "With desolation is the whole land made desolate, because there is no one that thinketh in his heart." "The Catholic Church cannot be blamed if Catholics have listened with only one ear and Protestants with neither."

A well-known priest and scholar is said to have stated: "I have studied deeply the different arguments for the divinity of the Church. But the one that appeals most to me personally is the argument from the history of the Church, and it is one that can be used with much forcefulness outside, for it is easily grasped by the layman."

Accordingly, as our object is to present just this very kind of argument, let us look at this one which merited such a high encomium from an eminent exponent of Catholic truth.

The Catholic Church will soon be celebrating her two thousandth birthday. If you are pleased to regard her for the moment as a merely human institution, I think you must feel inclined to agree that throughout the long life she has lived she must have accumulated treasures of wisdom which entitle her to a respectful hearing. You tell me you like to give your custom to a firm that is a good while in the business. You have confidence in the specialist who has made a profound study of the particular disease which is threatening you, and who is known to have cured it in other cases. You say that a man who has seen with his own eyes the events he describes can impart to his narrative a living interest which is palpably lacking when he tells you something that he has merely heard from another.

EXPERIENCE TEACHES

Now, apply the same principles to the Church and you will see already a reason for acknowledging Her authority. For two thousand years She has been studying human nature at close range, and for all that time She has been witness of the follies and the miseries of men as well as of their triumphs and their glories. She ought to have something worth saying then, oughtn't she? Even if she were only a human institution?

But Her age must impress you the more forcibly when you place it side by side with her history. It is nearly two thousand years since she, a tiny frail barque, was launched out on the deep seas. She was the handiwork of a Man Who, you would say, could have little opportunity for learning much about His art. Nearly His whole life was spent in an obscure village, and when at last He did emerge and move about amongst men, He made the disastrous mistake of stirring up against Him the one set of people who could have helped—the men with money and power. Of course the inevitable happened. He died in disgrace and His few followers ran away.

STILL AFLOAT

Wise men now declared that the little craft was certainly doomed. Very soon it would be well and truly submerged beneath the waves of the sea, and the world, as is the world's way, would presently forget all about it and the Dreamer

Who had built it. But lo, after His death it kept still afloat, and today, two thousand years after He has been placed in His grave, it continues to pursue its course with even keel. And such a stormy course! Times there have been when the captain himself of the craft has done everything in his power to run her on to the rocks. Mutinies on board have broken out amongst the crews from whom she expected, and rightly, the most unswerving loyalty. Pirates have pursued and attacked her, fierce storms have lashed against her, for many a dark night she has tossed up and down on the foam. You must surely give her up for lost. But no. She has not foundered. In spite of it all she has managed to keep afloat for two thousand years.

Earth and hell have been in league against her all this time, and have vented their rage in an unbroken series of persecutions. Schism and heresy have invaded her ranks, duped and carried off some of the noblest of her sons, and infected them with the poison of a hatred against her as unnatural as it was saddening to see. Men have slandered her, men have tried to make her look a fool, as did Herod to Jesus. Men have sounded her death knell. But she is living, not dead. She is triumphant still in spite of it all. The late revered Archbishop Goodier S.J. was fond of telling how he once stated in a public lecture that the Church had consistently increased in numbers since her foundation. The statement was challenged by a non-Catholic professor who was present, and the Archbishop challenged him, in turn, to prove the opposite. He tried but had to admit that he was unable.

THE END IS NOT YET

Seventy years ago Garibaldi proclaimed that the Papacy was dead. The *Times* had an article regretting the passing of a time-honoured institution, and *Punch* made merry in a cartoon depicting Garibaldi in the act of sweeping the Pope off the map of Italy into the sea. That is seventy years ago, and since then the Church has increased at the rate of about a million a year! And Garibaldi? —Who now remembers the mighty prophet? It is easy enough to imagine how exasperating this state of affairs must be to the enemies of the church. Provoking in the extreme to discover that when they have spared neither trouble nor expense in according the Church a decent burial, presently she stands before them in the vigour and freshness of life, making them cut a ridiculous figure in the sight of all men. A mighty chorus assembled for the funeral, the opening notes of the dirge already sounded, but lo, the coffin is found to be empty, and no one can discover where is the corpse!

Did we say that the little boat has kept afloat? Did we state that the Church was alive merely, as a man might be said to be still living who had fallen victim to a malignant disease? Not so, though even this would be much, considering the history she has behind her. But what are we to think when we learn that not only has she survived, but to look at her to-day you would say she must be manned by youthful oarsmen, all keen on their work, all agog and fresh and buoyant with youth's enthusiasm?

STORM AHOY

Today she is running into another storm, perhaps a storm of unprecedented violence, but she faces it with the same serene assurance that has ever characterised her for these two thousand years. Has she the smallest doubt about the ultimate issue of the struggle? Not she. She knows perfectly well that she is certainly going to see communism and modernism in their graves, side by side with nestorianism, and arianism, and the countless other "isms" that have ever sailed out to do battle. Hatred of the world she accepts as an expected part of her destiny. When one gale is over she spreads out her sails again and once more proceeds to plough the deep waters. She has been doing that sort of thing for two thousand years, and she has the calm conviction that she is going to keep on doing it till she sails into port. Two thousand years' existence would entitle her your respect. But when in addition you remember that that existence has been maintained and even strengthened in spite of all the forces assembled with diabolical ingenuity to crush it; When you look, not at her age merely, but at her history too, perhaps you begin to think that she may have still stronger claims upon your allegiance. An impartial non-Catholic may fairly ask why the Church continues to thrive thus in the teeth of such opposition. "What sayest thou of thyself?" Ask those on board if they have any hypothesis to offer. You know what Is

going to be their answer. No merely human institution could possibly have survived a fraction of all this. Still less could a human institution have flourished in such circumstances. Humanly speaking she should long since have perished, but the plain fact is that she cannot die because she has within her the seed of a life that is divine, Try as men will, they can never eradicate that seed. History should long since have taught them that in attacking her they are pitting their frail strength against the might and the power and the very life of God Himself. Against her the gates of hell will never prevail. This is the promise of the Son of God, and two thousand years of history are behind the Church to prove the fidelity of Christ to His promise.

SCANDALS IN THE CHURCH

A few pages back we quoted from Father Brodrick's monumental work on St. Peter Canisius. Another reference to it may serve as introduction to a new section of our booklet. The saint's letters are full of stories about the ravages heresy had wrought and they abound in truly saddening tales about an illiterate and immoral clergy and about the ignorance of nominal Catholics on even the fundamentals of their faith. Father Brodrick's pages bring us close up to the question of scandals in the Church. "It must needs be that scandals come" said Our Lord, and it is clear after reading Father Brodrick that the sixteenth century was not behind in contributing its quota. Reformation was sorely needed, for laxity and scandals were the order of the day. But the self constituted "Reformers" were not the men to reform, and moreover, they set about "reforming" the wrong thing. It was not the faith that needed reformation; it was morals.

Scandals in the Church grieve the Catholic, but they do not surprise him. As long as we are in the body we are subject to temptation. Greed of gold, love of power and adulation, the spirit of lust—all that is included in the triple concupiscence—these war against man in a fierce and determined effort to drag him down. So I am not surprised that there have been worldly popes and princes in the Church. I am prepared to admit, as matter of history, distressing stories of even men and women whose position in the Church would justify my expectations that they at least should be above reproach. The Catholic family is not a museum exhibit of saints, but a human family in which saints, publicans and sinners all feed from the same table."

A SENSE OF PROPORTION

But why not get things in proportion? To hear how some of our critics exploit the few unworthy Popes one would be inclined to forget that of the 264 successors of St Peter, eighty-three have been canonised for heroic virtue, and over fifty were chosen for the high office in spite of their own vigorous protests. To listen to some men criticising the clergy you would receive the impression that priests were a lot of money-grabbers who make use of religion as a man might use a shovel—to pack treasure into their coffers. If you are prepared to generalise from these exceptions, is it not at least as fair to generalise from the vast majority whose lives are above reproach?

If you are going to tar the whole line of the Popes with the same brush, why select Alexander VI rather than Gregory VII, or, say, Pius X? If you are going to sit in judgment on the clergy, why not make your standard Vincent de Paul, or the Cure of Ars, or Alphonsus Liguori? Admittedly, by no means will every priest measure up to that standard, but one can assert with confidence that that standard will prove to be the more representative of the general body of the priesthood.

Is your critic to ignore the vast array of saints that shine in the Church's crown? Is he going to shut his eyes to the truth that, if there are thorns in that crown, there are gems, too?

But I mustn't forget that criticism of Catholics is often a subtle compliment. The fact that a Catholic sins flagrantly is matter for condemnation. Why, except that his critic tacitly admits that he ought to be better?

In another such a crime might be condoned—but in a Catholic And the innuendo is a tribute to the high standards normal amongst Catholics.

TO THE HEIGHTS!

Human nature is sick, grievously so, as a result of the fall. - Therefore, sin, even in high places, does not surprise any

reasonable man. But what does fill him with amazement is the heights of holiness scaled by so many of the sons and daughters of the Church. He stands astonished when he sees how they succeed in overcoming their natural sinful tendencies, in living in the flesh a life that bids fair to rival the purity of the angels. It is this that surprises, and it is this that proves conclusively that these men and women were supported by a force stronger than human clay.

“It must needs be that scandals come.” Why? over and above our innate sinfulness there is the world’s care to exploit this tendency. The Church, seated in the midst of enemies, is open to attack on every side. Often her children hear arguments brought up against her, and often they do not know the answer, and they are led to think, that in point of fact there is no answer. Or they see her teaching ignored or laughed at and the cankerworm of human respect eats into their practice of the faith. Or they find her too rigid. Other religions are so free and easy, so accommodating. (Not so long ago an eminent non-Catholic clergyman made the noble boast that his views were as broad as O’Connell-street! Happy man, happy phrase, and what soul-satisfying pasture must such a pastor provide for his flock!)

Well, the Catholic discovers that his religion has her anathemas. Outside the Church you can believe and act more or less as you wish, and provided you preserve a modicum of external respectability, nobody is going to worry you. But a Catholic cannot get away with that sort of thing. His morals must be consistent with his beliefs.

LETTING YOUR LIGHT SHINE

We must not end before indicating what is in many ways the most effective defence of our faith. “Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven.” We have seen something of the calamitous results to the Church of bad example on the part of her children. But it is not the less true that the good example of every individual Catholic forms a stone in the building which will make for the strength and the beauty of the entire edifice. “If all Catholics are like that . . .” So men will argue, illogically, no doubt, but we have to face facts as we find them. “If all Catholics are like that”—it can be a glowing tribute or a scathing jibe.

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