

# THE CONFESSIONS OF AN AUSTRALIAN CONVERT

John Crotty

*"Men will not believe because they will not broaden their minds. . . ."*—G. K. Chesterton

Born in Melbourne in 1911, named after a grand-uncle whose career in high finance was to be crowned with a knighthood (Sir John Russell French), I was a true child of the age, dominated as a matter of fact by a blind faith in scientific progress and capitalist efficiency: the titles of the books I chose as prizes at school are significant:—“*Modern Inventions*,” was one of them, as was “*Electricity of Today*,” “*The Romance of Modern Engineering*,” “*This World of Ours*.” In the meantime, grace was at work alongside of nature: devout parents secured for me the blessing of Christian Baptism (my father was a clergyman of the Church of England, and his brother, my godfather, is a Bishop of the same denomination), and it is through them, humanly speaking, that I came to know and love God and His Church.

## 1. EARLY YEARS.

But to begin at the beginning. We were five little Australians, blissfully ignorant of the spacious Catholic world existing abroad, even within our predominantly Protestant Empire (though we knew and respected the noble work of nuns, as two of us had godmothers among the Anglican Sisters at Cheltenham). No wonder, then, that a good-humoured reference to that strange world by a dear friend of the family has stuck fast in my memory—“God help us poor Protestants, there are so few of us.”

My education began at Moreland State School and continued at the Church of England Grammar Schools of Launceston and Melbourne. At the latter I had the privilege of being taught by Carl Kaepfel of whom Professor Chisholm has written that, “no man in Australia has done more to preserve intellectual ideals and to indicate the values of scholarship. None ever passed through his hands at Melbourne Grammar School . . . without getting some insight into intellectual processes and learning to appreciate scholarship. . . He had unlimited faith in the British way of life and in the British Empire, and he defended his beliefs most valiantly during the first World War, when he served in France as an officer in the 18<sup>th</sup> A.I.F. Battalion and won the Military Cross. . . . In Sydney, where he spent his last years—and where he had first been educated—he was converted to Catholicism. . . . It was, he said, partly an intellectual conversion and was partly based on the conviction that the Catholic Church was the only organized spiritual force capable of resisting the infiltration of those Communist doctrines that he loathed. . . .”

## 2. AT THE UNIVERSITY.

From a nominally Christian school I went into a frankly atheist Education Department and University, to which I went up in 1930 on a Government Studentship, won as a Junior Teacher at Abbotsford State School during the previous year. “The Australian way is secular education,” writes Bernard Shaw in a book I read at that time, “meaning total exclusion of religious and philosophical teaching. Now to teach science without any reference to philosophy and religion is to present the world to the child as an automatic machine worked by soulless mechanical forces and energies without purpose or scruple—the organism called man goes through a course of action as an avalanche does when it goes down hill, or a hydrogen balloon when it rises through the air. You can no more draw a line and put a barrier between the temporal and spiritual in education than you can in the soul of man.” (*Sham Education*.)

But it was only years after, as a Catholic, that I found the true philosophy of education. Meantime my Protestant public school religion succumbed to scepticism, and in spite of the satisfaction I found in student life, convivial and otherwise, playing cricket and football, and from time to time falling in love, I was vaguely conscious of the fact that my Catholic fellow-students did not find life quite so meaningless as myself.

A period of no less than seven years elapsed before I was received into the Church. During all that time my mind turned constantly to study of the faith of my fore-fathers. I began rebuilding my lost Christian faith from the imperishable materials provided by what my Anglican friends spoke of as “the Catholic heritage of the Church of England.” And I remember that it was from my father, whose ample library bespoke the true Doctor of Divinity, that I borrowed that profound little book of Christopher Dawson, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement*, published by Sheed and Ward in 1933, the centenary of the movement. It was my first glimpse of the intellectual giant that Newman became in his Roman maturity, and of Rome as the true terminus of the movement. But my Anglican loyalty was triumphant for the time being (I have no recollection of its being tested by any shadow of doubt), and I took my stand with Keble and Pusey on the Anglican Prayer Book and the doctrines of its court of appeal (as yet known only by Anglican report), the early Church. I had moved from a Government hostel in Parkville to Trinity College in 1931, on winning a scholarship there, and thoroughly enjoyed the open forum for the discussion of every subject under the sun which university life there and across Tin Alley provides.

### 3. ANGLICAN ORDINATION.

The year 1933 found me flaunting an Arts degree, qualifying for a post-graduate scholarship in French, failing in Diploma of Education exams,—and in health. Invalided out of the service of the State, I sought to enter the service of the Church, much to the annoyance of even a *Christian* professor at Melbourne’s secular university, who asked a friend of mine why a first-class honours man was talking about wasting his life in such a way!

My theological studies began at Trinity, the chaplaincy of which I was offered at the end of the year (1934) by the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne. However, I preferred to stay with my uncle, who had just ordained me deacon at Bathurst. During his absence in England, his Coadjutor, Bishop Wylde, ordained me to the Anglican priesthood, in June, 1935, at Forbes, where I was serving my curacy. We had parochial hostels for boys and girls attending the local high school, and there, as in Victoria, the subjection of baptized children to a non-Christian education struck me as a scandal as well as a sham.

I began to see why a faithful few refused to bow the knee to Baal; why a fifth of the population of Australia denied themselves the use of a school system which they could have used as tax-payers, and instead had to pay all over again for one they could use as Christians.

Nor does my experience lead me to hope for the Christianizing of the State system by allowing its teachers to supplement the clergyman’s weekly half-hour of “Religion.” For example, the Forbes High School Magazine published in 1934 a play which showed that the unfortunate pupils had been given as “history” a view of Luther as a noble symbol of a noble Germany waging a war that was still on against our common enemy the Catholic Church. For myself, I saw *Hitler* as the true heir of Luther (though he had, like Luther, been baptized a Catholic) and when Hitler first came to power I had denounced Nazism as the imminent peril to Christian civilization in an editorial in the Melbourne University weekly, *Farrago*. Hence I was not exactly happy in collaborating with a system of education which fostered such strange misconceptions of the truth. In the case of wealthy parents, of course, we could offer a Christian education for their children at Bathurst or Sydney, but what was that compared with the Christian education given by the Marist Brothers at their college in our town and by the Sisters at every far-flung convent, to children who were often as poor as themselves?

I borrowed Archbishop Sheehan’s *Apologetics and Christian Doctrine*: what better preparation for life could a school give? Could such good fruit as the lives of these dedicated teachers grow on an evil tree? My theological text books accused “Rome” of so many corruptions that I thought I’d better see what it had to say for itself. I bought Dr. Rumble’s *Radio Replies*. “Oh, it’s all lies,” said the theological luminary to whom I referred some of the replies, “as you’ll see when you get among scholars in England”—where he and other friends had always urged me to go, to complete my theological education.

#### **4. IN ENGLAND.**

So to England I went, accompanying my uncle and his family when he left the See of Bathurst for the pulpit of St. Pancras in 1936. I had found a true friend in my Rector at Forbes, and have the happiest recollections of all the clergymen I came in contact with in the diocese, nor will I ever forget my uncle's zeal for the things of God, which was an inspiration to us all. I have pleasant memories, too, of the home life of parishioners I used to visit, and also of a Catholic family which their friends of all denominations regarded as a model of goodness and joyousness, and which has since seemed to me a modern counterpart of the household of that great humorist and model of civic virtues, who died a martyr for Our Lord and His Vicar on earth: Sir Thomas, now Saint Thomas, More.

Even before I left Australia I was regarded as being more English than the English, so saw nothing incongruous at the time in the Lambeth Curia treating Australia as a colony, when I went to receive a license from the Archbishop of Canterbury to exercise my ministry in England, under the Colonial Clergy Act.

For eight months I buried myself in the heart of England, as assistant to the curate in charge of the parishes of All Saints and St. Laurence, Evesham, who was the soul of kindness to me, and I proceeded to lose all interest in Australia until Holy Church, which is the Mother of us all, as St. Paul says, taught her returning prodigal son to love the sunburnt country of his birth.

#### **5. FURTHER STUDIES.**

But I anticipate: In Michaelmas term, 1936, I began a two-years' course of study in the Faculty of Theology at Oxford, and soon found that the real scholars there would admit Dr. Rumble's contentions, and that the "lies" were on the other side. And in informal discussions in the Origen Society, and other places, I heard not only the Modernist views taught in Australian theological colleges, but also those of such Catholic Biblical scholars as Lagrange and Grandmaison; and Professor Lightfoot, for one, spoke of them with respect. I had also been told about apostate priests and disloyal Catholics among the so-called intelligentsia of Europe, as an encouragement to enter the Anglican ministry. I met some of them, but did not find these meetings exactly encouraging. I had an Australian letter of introduction to one of the theologians who eventually presented the "Report on Doctrine in the Church of England". What I heard from him of all schools of thought reaching a surprising measure of agreement, saved me at least from being surprised myself when the Anglican Archbishops published the document in 1938. The orthodox party among the clergy, be it said to their credit, repudiated its implications at once, but the unorthodox party welcomed it, and the effect on the unbelieving world which the Church exists to convert to the truth, was to give ecclesiastical respectability to heresy.

#### **6. PAPAL CLAIMS**

Fortunately, my studies at Oxford took me not only to the great Anglican divines, but also to the Fathers and Councils of the early Church, whom reason as well as Faith point to as the true interpreters of Our Lord and His Apostles. I found that the Papacy was regarded as being of the essence of Christianity, and that "Fourteen centuries before Pius IX Papal infallibility was already proclaimed," as Vladimir Soloviev declared in 1889.

On the much misunderstood dogma of Papal Infallibility, I found that Shaw was right when he wrote in the preface to his *St. Joan*, "compared to our infallible democracies, our infallible medical councils, our infallible astronomers, our infallible judges, our infallible parliaments, the Pope is on his knees in the dust confessing his ignorance before the throne of God."

"Dominus Illuminatio Mea" is Oxford's motto: The Lord is my light. In matters both of faith and of morals that light was coming to me from the Catholic and Roman Church which founded Oxford. Even Professor Lightfoot's lectures on St. Mark's Gospel, which I attended, were introduced by a courageous avowal of the failure of Protestant scholarship to emancipate Christians from dependence on the Church for our knowledge of Christ. The lecturer on Scripture at Pusey House was following the rulings of the Roman Pontifical Biblical Commission, because of the weight of sound scholarship behind it. My special field of study embraced the works of the French Bishop Bossuet as well as those of his

Anglican contemporaries, and my understanding of all Christian doctrines was enriched in the process,

Immorality and race suicide were once again threatening to undermine society, as when Salvian described the cities of the Roman Empire as a series of vast brothels. I learned from the late Pope's *Encyclical on the Sacrament of Matrimony* that the practice of contraception commonly hailed as making the unmarried safe from the consequences of indulging their passions, was sinful even for married people, and that the flouting of moral laws, as of physical laws, is a flying in the face of reality which has its inevitable retribution here or hereafter.

On the other hand I found that in 1930 the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Bishops had given a limited approval to contraception. By about 1937 T. S. Eliot's *Thoughts After Lambeth* were my thoughts on the subject too. On this and other points, including the fundamental point of the indissolubility of a valid marriage, we must stand once more where Rome has always stood, upholding Christ's life-giving law, not just in some respects and in some dioceses, but, as He commanded, every jot and tittle of it, in each and every place.

On other questions of social and political morality—there had been Papal encyclicals which provided rallying points for Christians of all denominations. "*Quadragesimo Anno*" on the abuses of present-day capitalism and the true rights of capital and labour; "*Non Abbiamo Bisogno*," on the revived "pagan worship of the State," exemplified in Italian Fascism and its followers; "*Mit Brennender Sorge*" on the Nazi tyranny, "*Divini Redemptoris*" denouncing Communism, and offering truth and love to Communists. The Russian Orthodox writer, Berdyaev, in *The End of Our Time*, had warned us since the Russian Revolution "the rhythm of history has become catastrophic," and the Pope's words on Nazism and Communism were a last warning of what is now come upon us.

## **7. SIGNS OF AWAKENING.**

I tried to persuade myself that it was my duty to assist the spread of the Catholic message to man and society through the Church of my upbringing, as Eliot and many other better men than I sought to do, and to satisfy the claims of Our Lord's Vicar on earth to my personal allegiance by the pious hope of "corporate reunion." There were signs of a growing recognition of Catholic truth among Anglicans. There was a "*Church Times*" controversy in which it was conclusively proved that the commonest Protestant objection against Transubstantiation had been met by modern science. Oxford granted a research doctorate to Rev. Dr. Scott for his *Eastern Churches and the Papacy*; and Professor Nairne, of Cambridge, had written in the *Church Quarterly Review* in 1928 that the Roman Canon of the Mass is "the best of all prayers in its direct unadorned prayerfulness." In the diocese of Worcester in which I continued to take Sunday duty for some time after going up to Oxford, Miss Evelyn Underhill, asked by Bishop Perowne to address his clergy, gave them the fruit of her own studies of the Catholic mystics, and recommended, as helps in their interior and professional lives, Dom John Chapman's "*Spiritual Letters*" and a book on the Sacrament of Penance based on modern Catholic sources. My friends in the Nashdom and Cowley communities drew their spiritual strength under God from such sources.

## **8. SOME WITNESSES TO THE TRUTH.**

But here again I had to face the question of *obedience* to the Faith. This latter was the fruit of the experience of a Benedictine Abbot, the turning point of which had been his conversion to Rome as a deacon at St. Pancras' Church in London, in the days when a predecessor of my uncle, Bishop Paget, was Vicar. In answering Bishop Gore's accusations of "pride," etc., against the Catholic Church of today, he began by repeating in all simplicity the only kind of invitation to share her mission that the Church of Christ has ever given: "*You are serving Him in your way, we serve Him in His.*" And a clergyman friend had told me of the submission to Rome for conscience' sake of Bishop Kinsman (a graduate of my own college, Keble) after seeing the effect of attempting to apply the sacramental and hierarchical principles of the Oxford Movement to the realities of American Episcopalian Church life. Dr. Pusey, it was true, had remained an Anglican, but there was a tradition at Oxford that after Newman's conversion he was never seen to smile again. Moreover, since a widower, Archdeacon of Chichester, became a Catholic, and Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, clergymen of all denominations, married and unmarried, had been making their submission at an average rate of one a month in

England alone. Monsignor Ronald Knox, then stationed at Oxford, was the son of a Bishop; Robert Hugh Benson had been the son of an Archbishop of Canterbury.

Among the Eastern schismatics, too, God had not left Himself without witnesses to the necessity of Catholic unity, from the Greek Bishop Bessarion, when his fellow-bishops repudiated the reunion of the Council of Florence, to various Indian Bishops in my own time, men whose birth or position seemed to mark them out as perpetuators of heresy or schism, but who had heard and followed a Voice to which all around them were deaf (as the Russian Bishop Meletzev did recently, *since* Stalin re-established the Church). Millions of men and women (now organized as Uniate Churches) have thus been brought back to Catholic unity. Nor does the Catholic who holds the doctrine (*Unam Sanctam*) that it is objectively necessary for everyone to be subject to the Roman Pontiff thereby relegate to damnation those who in all sincerity believe otherwise, as I had learned from Karl Adam's book, *The Spirit of Catholicism*. It is the Church's enemies, not her theologians, who thus interpret this doctrine, ignoring its theological context and its continuity with the Athanasian Creed, and with Our Lord's teaching that all who reject Christianity itself will be condemned (Mark 16, 16): the doctrine of invincible ignorance illumines much of the teaching of Christ and His Church, and its wide application is the measure of the charitableness of theologians.

## **9. THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.**

Moreover, the more I studied the New Testament, the more convinced I was that it is of the essence of Christianity to be infallibly taught as a complete body of doctrine to a unique body of followers, the People of God, the cross section of humanity portrayed in the Parables as good and bad fish, wheat and tares, all mixed up until the Last Judgement. It was also the Mystical Body of Christ, in which name the Epistles echo Our Lord's burning words to the man who thought he was persecuting a human organization: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

And the more I learned of history, the more clearly I saw that human society was healthy or unhealthy according to whether or not it allowed itself to be leavened, not by Christian individuals or by sects cut off from the Body, but by that divine and human Thing itself. For example, "In England it was the Church rather than the State that led the way to national unity, through its common organization, its annual synods, and its tradition of administration. In the political sphere the Anglo-Saxon culture was singularly barren of achievement . . . Benedictine Abbeys were not only the intellectual and religious leaders of Europe, but also the chief centres of material culture and of artistic and industrial activity . . . the monks made it their business to clear the forests and drain the fens and to establish flourishing settlements" (Dawson: *The Making of Europe*, Sheed & Ward, London, 1936). At Evesham I had under my eyes a microcosm of this Europe, the "Merrie England" that had been. The local tradition was to the effect that Our Lady had founded the Abbey of Evesham and through it the town; by appearing there to St. Egwin, seventh century Bishop of Worcester, and moving him to become first Abbot of the monks who were to pray and work on this hallowed ground until the Reformation. In that little portion of Mary's Dowry I learned so to love her that I eventually took her all-powerful name at my Confirmation, and there, too, I was drawn closer to her Son by the devotion to His Sacred Heart, which arose in what are known to historians as the Benedictine centuries.

## **10. THE CHURCH IN HISTORY.**

But to revert to what I was learning of the Church's role in history. By the end of the Middle Ages, she had obtained the abolition of slavery, step by step, against the vested interests of the ruling class, but in proportion as her social activity was rejected it was always coming back under new forms: Of the capitalist industrialism of his time, Southey had said: "The slave trade was a mercy compared with this." And Belloc's prophecy of a new transition from citizenship to slavery was already coming true in Italy, Germany and Russia, as it has since in Poland and other countries virtually annexed by Russia, and as it threatens (under Governments representing the majority of the people) to do in Australia and in England at the time of writing. What lesson does the history of the nominally Christian Roman Empire teach us here? "Under the later Empire the Church came more and more to take the place of the old civic organization as the organ of popular

consciousness. It was not itself the cause of the downfall of the city state, which was perishing from its own weakness, but it provided a substitute through which the life of the people could find new modes of expression. . . . The citizenship of the future lay in membership of the Church. In the Church the ordinary man found material and economic assistance and spiritual liberty. The opportunities for spontaneous social activity and free co-operation which were denied by the bureaucratic despotism of the State continued to exist in the spiritual society of the Church, and consequently the best of the thought and practical ability of the age were devoted to its service” (*Making of Europe*, p. 35). Again today, the real leaders of men, as far as the Catholic minority were concerned, were not their politicians, but their Bishops.

On the destiny of men in most countries and nations I found plenty of food for thought, and not least in Shakespeare’s plays, deeply impregnated as they are with the Catholic view of life. “Middle Ages Catholicism was abolished, so far as Acts of Parliament could abolish it, before Shakespeare, the noblest product of it, made his appearance,” as Carlyle wrote in “*the Hero as Poet*”; and I saw him draw Catholic lessons from stories of every age when I attended from nearby Evesham, a whole season’s repertoire at Stratford-on-Avon. The contemporary world, too, was a stage, but some of its scenes were of a sterner reality: bishops, priests, brothers, nuns, were being added in Spain to the age-old list of Christian martyrs. In England, as Dr. Inge has written in the *Fortnightly Review*, “The Public was deliberately misled by mendacious propaganda” (quoted in *The Bulletin*, Sydney, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1947), Anglican dignitaries taking a leading part, in the teeth of exposures by the Dean and such authorities on Spain as Prof. Peers, of Liverpool University (a devout Anglican). When the priests of Russia were being “liquidated” twenty years before, the Pope had stood by them in word and deed, as a fellow-Christian, though they were not in communion with him. When the leaders of the Church I was serving saw their fellow-Christians in Spain threatened with the same fate, they were silent or (as a non-Catholic layman expressed it, in discussing a later instance of the kind) “Preferred to their Christian ministry that of Antichrist.”

### **11. HELPS ON THE ROAD (or Various Influences).**

Influences in the realm of reason are hard enough to assess: the graces that lead from reason’s probabilities (for Catholicism and against any other religious allegiance) to the certainty of Faith are known to God alone. So I shall simply record, with gratitude, the bare facts that I discovered after my conversion, that Catholic friends had long been praying for it. In holiday times in the year preceding it I had been to several of the holy places of the old world: Glastonbury, with its memories of St. Joseph of Arimathea, the Holy Grail, and the other Arthurian legends, and of its great Abbey, which gave England so many saints and statesmen, until the Reformation decreed its death; Ars, where the parish priest, St. John Vianney, had fulfilled, before the incredulous eyes of the modern world, Our Lord’s promise to His representatives: “The works that I do, he shall do, and greater than these shall he do”; Paray-le-Monial, where He had appeared to St. Margaret Mary, and told her how His Sacred Heart longs for the love of us men for whom it was broken; Lisieux, where St. Teresa of the Child Jesus had become a saint within living memory; the Cistercian (Trappist) Abbeys of Sept-Fons, where a non-Catholic guest had written in the Visitors’ Book: “Here we have felt the beating of Christ’s heart,” and of Notre Dame des Dombes, whose monks had inscribed on their walls this testimony of the reigning Pope—“It is easily understood that those who discharge perpetual duties of prayer and mortification contribute much more to the growth of the Church and the salvation of mankind than those who cultivate the Lord’s field by active works.”

At the beginning of 1938 I ceased to administer the Anglican sacraments, but continued to receive them until, soon after asking for instruction in the Roman Faith, I attained to that certainty of its truth which I have been blessed with ever since: “You all shall KNOW the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” So I turned from uncovenanted to covenanted means of grace. I had seen the gulf (to be bridged by grace alone) that yawned between Catholics on the one hand and all my non-Catholic friends and mentors on the other—and they ranged from Dr. Wheller Robinson, Chairman of the Board of the Faculty of Theology (whose Congregationalist lectures on Biblical subjects belonged, like the Anglican ones given at Ripon Hall and at Jesus, to the Modernist or “earthquake” period), to the pro-Papal clergyman who thus concluded a friendly talk on the eve of my reconciliation to the Church: “The difference between us seems to be that with you the Papal supremacy enters into the matter of the act of Faith.” This was a more crucial difference than one, for example,

about the arguments for the Immaculate Conception (incidentally, a lecturer at one Anglican seminary in Oxford thought it meant that Mary was conceived without human intercourse). For becoming a Catholic is not a question of satisfying one's devotional bent, or of coming in out of the wet in the political, sociological, or any other order of human things. It is the facing of a challenge, a personal challenge, from a Person one loves: "If you all love Me, you all will keep My commandments." He commands us, among other things, to love the brotherhood (I Peter 2), His one Church, His Spouse, and to prove love by obedience: "He that hears you hears Me, and he that despises you despises Me. . . ."

## **12. RECEPTION.**

In my last Oxford vacation I had the privilege of staying at Mount Melleray Abbey, home of the Irish sons of St. Bernard, where I came once more upon the very heart of the Church, and found it to be none other than the heart of Our Lord, the same Sacred Heart that St. John had been so close to at the Last Supper, and that I had learned to love at my mother's knee. Returning to Oxford, I was taken under the hospitable roof of Fr. Leo O'Hea, S.J., at the Catholic Workers' College—unemployed though I was, and not yet a Catholic!! How happy I was in that last term, receiving instructions from Fr. Victor White, O.P., attending Mass, saying Vespers and other parts of the Divine Office, and writing the thesis which was the fruit of my special studies. For the latter I received the degree of Bachelor of Letters, and have published in the Melbourne quarterly, *Twentieth Century* (March, 1948), the portions of it which correct some long-standing errors of the Rev. Dr. Sparrow Simpson and other writers on Bossuet and the subject matter of his works.

But again I anticipate. A few days before this, the catechumen had been absolved from heresy and schism and all his other sins, by a man to whom the keys of the Kingdom, the august powers of Holy Order and Jurisdiction over His subjects had been lawfully entrusted by Christ our King; and the next day, at Holy Communion, he entered into the completeness of union with the Head and all members of the Mystical Body of Christ, including those whose membership is invisible and un-statistical. It was the feast of Pentecost.

## **13. SUBSEQUENT REFLECTIONS.**

And have your Pentecostal expectations been realized? a reader may ask. As regards my own person, the piece of twisted metal that I brought to the Church to be twisted straight, I answer: As well as can be expected. Among my fellow-Catholics, I have seen the happiness of those who seek first the Kingdom of God, especially the young apostles whose daily work has been transformed by Catholic Action ideals, and the unhappiness of those who having cast off the easy yoke and the light burden of Christ, no longer frequent His Holy Sacrifice and Sacraments. I have seen Ecclesia Australiana producing her first Cardinal, regenerating and civilizing eager pagan souls on her north-east frontier in New Guinea and protecting them against what Prof. Malinowski once described as the "pandemonium" of Western civilization (*International Review of Missions*, July, 1936), and making many conversions, too, in her five home provinces. The grace of God has taught me to see, as never before, the workings of His Providence; to mean, as well as say, "Your will be done . . .", for man proposes but God disposes. We have here below no abiding city, and when our citizenship is really in heaven, all things without exception work together for good. I gratefully acknowledge that the self-same grace of God has kept my Anglican relatives and friends close to me in charity and affection.

In spite of human imperfections, I have found realized in the Catholic Church the Christian ideal expressed by St. Augustine as "In things essential unity, in things not essential liberty, in all things charity"; or, as my father used to say, "All's love, yet all's law." I may add that it was a great act of courtesy and charity on the part of a great Archbishop that first reconciled my father to my conversion and hopes of being found suitable for the Catholic Priesthood. To cut a long story short, October, 1938, found me at the College of St. Bede in Rome for a year of Christian philosophy (my Anglican text-book had been a survey of philosophy by an American named Durant).

## **14. MY SPIRITUAL HOME.**

"All Christian pilgrimages must end in Rome," says H. V. Morton (*Through Lands of the Bible*), "because alone of all

the ancient patriarchates of the once Universal Church, Rome has preserved unbroken contact with the Apostolic Age.” I have been at those Masses in the catacombs that even this non-Catholic writer found so moving; and have lived long enough among students of the five continents doing higher studies in Rome to know that the Church is still Universal as well as Roman. I have served a West Australian Monsignor’s Mass at the tomb of St. Peter on his great high feast . . . and when next I heard from him he was Brother Jerome, leading the hidden life of a missionary hermit in the West Indies; kept a night-watch over the body of a Pope, and seen a new one, blacklisted by the Nazi and Fascist press, triumphantly elected to the Holy See. I have rejoiced with an Australian priest over his first Mass, offered at the tomb of St. Paul, and among the Benedictines who serve the magnificent Basilica which enshrines that tomb I have found a spiritual home, being enrolled among the Oblates of that Abbey—priests and clerics, laymen and women, bachelors and fathers of families, who try this way to make their whole life revolve around the liturgical worship of God.

I cannot close without a word of gratitude for blessings received at Whitlands, Victoria, where I saw a church arise and an integrally Christian community grow up around it and its priest, under the inspiration of St. Benedict and St. Francis and of an uncompromising Australian disciple of both. They have kept their spiritual roots and lost their contact with the existing order of society, instead of preserving their social contacts and losing their spiritual roots, which Christopher Dawson presents to the Christian in our post-Christian world as a more and more urgent choice. This means, among other things, helping one another to produce the necessities of life by manual labour—the dignity of which I am glad to have learned by actual practice.

And, finally, an acknowledgement of my debt to New Norcia Abbey, whose Spanish founder, Bishop Salvado, brought to Australia the Benedictine missionary tradition of Pope St. Gregory the Great and St. Augustine of Canterbury; with results that won for him Florence Nightingale’s admiration and the lasting friendship of Lord Forrester: and whose present community’s prayer and work, at the Abbey and at its Mission on the north coast of West Australia, have wrought more things in peace and in war than their adopted country dreams of.

## 15. READING MATTER.

And now a word about books. As it was in the beginning, when St. Peter wrote the first Papal Encyclical (1<sup>st</sup> Epistle of Peter) and St. Paul was forming saints and correcting sinners in every part of the Gentile world, so now a man needs no books, but only the humility to which God gives grace, to recognize the City set on a hill. But to those who read books, and yet no Catholic books, or not enough to offset the unconscious prejudice of the modern man against the ancient Faith, I recommend the reading of some of the books quoted above, and below. I must beg the reader not to think that the few quotations made in passing exhaust the matters with which they deal (you cannot take Catholicism up in a teacup, as Newman once observed), or that I have been engaged in comparing Catholicism with Anglicanism, as a reader of another draft of this pamphlet thought (a more savage draft which found no publisher). I assure the reader that, like Lord Cecil, I regard the Church as an Evangelist, whose Message is beyond all comparison, and that I think it a Christian duty to warn men against all institutions which keep them from hearing the full message, but especially against those I know by personal experience, and to pass on gratefully to others the helps to hearing the full message that individuals in those institutions have given me. I regret that it is necessary to explain also that I regard such men as Our Lord’s friends, and therefore mine, and had no more intention than Lord Cecil of questioning their sincerity when I quoted his letter denouncing Our Lord’s enemies.

As a matter of fact, I am so convinced of their sincerity that I think they would turn at once to the Church if they saw that “the Churches” are a device of the devil for dividing the friends of Christ and bewildering the souls of those they have yet to win to Him. I regard it as a work of charity to them to remind them that our common Master foresaw all these things, and has given His disciples not only a warning against them, but a remedy: “Behold, Satan has desired to have you [He is addressing Peter, but the ‘you’ is plural, as the Greek text shows] that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for *thee*, that *thy* faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, *confirm thy brethren*” (Luke 22: 31-32).

Let us see the situation clearly, and see it whole. Protestants of all denominations rejoice, and rightly so, that their



foreign missions, each according to its lights, win for Christ many souls in whom grace triumphs over the scandal of division. But as an example of the other side of the story, I will just mention that Protestant Liberal theology, disseminated by the printing presses of Cairo as Christian support for the Moslem view of Christ, has been holding up the conversion of the Middle East for half a century.

## **16. AMAZING MISREPRESENTATION.**

Shortly before my conversion I was sent a book by Canon Maynard, *Continuity of the Church of England*: its defence of Anglicanism consists largely of a caricature of 16<sup>th</sup> century Catholicism, a “revelation” of scandals and abuses, unrelated to the Council of Trent, at which they were admitted by all (including the Papal Legates who presided), denounced and reformed. They will be found in their proper place in any Catholic history or in such a work as the Cambridge Modern History. If we were to be regaled with so many details of the court life of a Borgia prince who intruded himself into the priesthood and the papacy, might we not have heard a little of the reformed and reforming Borgia who became General of the Jesuits and a saint? Or been referred to the life of St. Pius V, the Pope who did so much to reform Europe, and excommunicated Queen Elizabeth when she proved impenitent in her claim to be supreme governor in England of the Church of the living God? Or to a life of a few others among the saints, over a hundred in number, that the “Roman” Church produced just before and during the “Reformation” period? Will our author go to none but Protestant sources for his explanation of the English Reformation? Unto Caesar he shall go. It was “engendered in lust, brought forth in hypocrisy and perfidy, and nourished and fed by plunder, devastation, and rivers of innocent English and Irish blood” (William Cobbett, a Member of Parliament in the days when that privilege was reserved to Anglicans).

“Love men, slay their errors,” said St. Augustine, whom so many followed to the Truth which he had found. “Neither in the confusion of the pagans, nor in the sweepings of the heretics, nor in the feebleness of the schismatics, nor in the blindness of the Jews, is religion to be sought, but only among those who are called Catholic or orthodox Christians, that is, keepers and right followers of the whole truth” (Augustine: *De Vera Religione*). When an Anglican Archbishop earnestly commends to his readers the long-discredited anti-Jesuit sweepings of *Continuity of the Church of England*, and an Anglican Primate solemnly warns the people of Adelaide that “political Romanism” is one of their most fearful perils, heresy stands revealed in all its destitution, and we may well sympathize with Mr. Stanley High, a Congregationalist minister, who recently deplored this sort of thing in an appeal (in the *Readers’ Digest*) for something more positive from his fellow-Protestants: “. . . The really vital matter is that for the modern man the Roman Catholic Church has something to offer which Protestantism isn’t offering.”

## **17. MASONRY.**

Another institution whose errors make men strangers, and sometimes enemies, to revealed truth, is Masonry. I was not a member myself, but saw enough of its influence during my Anglican ministry to think it worth while at the time to read a book by an English Non-conformist, Rev. C. P. Hunt, B.A., entitled *The Menace of Freemasonry to the Christian Faith*, making the following notes from it: “The Solomon so much admired by Masons, having built a temple to Jehovah, (Yahweh) (the only true God) proceeded to permit the worship of Baal therein. . . . ‘The broad-minded Solomon’. . . ; (Masons take over St. Paul’s name for the Church) ‘the household of the Faith.’ . . . Other writers filch such texts as ‘living stones’ and ‘fitly framed together,’ cutting out the phrase ‘Christ the chief corner-stone’ . . . (filching also) ‘the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’ . . . The evidence is over-whelming that the Craft takes the place of the Church. . . It is the most glaring case of schism. . . I have received letters from all parts of the country from ministers testifying that such (frustration of their Christian ministry) is the local effect of Masonry. . . The Bishop of Bradford . . . stated that if the documentary evidence of this book were substantiated, he would have to reconsider his relationship to the Craft. . . .”

## **18. TO REBUILD THE WORLD.**

I have “kept at my thesis”: this pamphlet is its bibliography. I regarded it as a much greater service to the Christian

cause to offer such a reading list to the Australian public than to write lesser books myself. My thesis points to the Catholic Church for the strength by which our Empire and the civilization of the West “might yet be saved” and the sacrifices of our sailors, soldiers and airmen in the last war made fruitful. This conviction arises not from bigotry, but from what I know of the past history and present state of the portion of humanity that forms this once Christian civilization. The Church alone dispenses the graces that convert whole nations: she who is converting kingdoms in Africa would give to us, if we were willing, similar graces. The first of these would surely be repentance for sins which cry to heaven for vengeance: for example, our attitude to war on women and children at home (Australian homes are being broken up in the Divorce Courts at an average rate of twenty a day) and abroad. The eminent scientist, Sir David Rivett, describes the Allies’ abuse of atomic research in the recent war as “ghastly,” but the public is apparently not interested in the moral implications of such things. Nothing but the stark supernatural stands up for our salvation, as Chesterton put it when explaining the Dark Ages as a necessary purgatory between the corrupt paganism of the ancient world and the new Christian civilization of the Middle Ages (*St. Francis*, p. 35).

It is not, of course the cultural darkness, but the moral light, of the Dark Ages that we must seek again. Modern civilization springs, on its non-religious side, from the Renaissance—the re-birth, as Ruskin reminds us, of pagan pride; it has now brought in its train, one after another, all the old phenomena of pagan cruelty and sensuality. “The sins of the world, especially now sins of the flesh, cry to heaven for vengeance. Do penance, say the Rosary, practice devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If men amend their lives, God will spare the world. If my requests are observed, Russia will be converted and there will be peace. . . .” (The Blessed Virgin at Fatima, in the year of the first Communist Revolution.)

Catholicity is the God-laid foundation on which men are meant to build their world: they may ignore it (and come to grief thereby), but it alone abides of the things that are seen. This was the message of Soloviev, vividly illustrated in the last of his books (*Three Dialogues*) by a scene showing the end of the world. Over against the unity of Antichrist and the apostates, the last Pope (Peter II) and the Catholics are chanting imperturbably: “They shall not prevail.” The Metropolitan John and the Professor Paul bring their followers, Orthodox and Protestant, to join them. The true unity of men is consummated. A light shines, a sign appears in the heavens: a Woman clothed with the sun. The Pope leads the flock towards Mary, and the glory of God.

St. Michael, via Madang, New Guinea, Epiphany, 1948.

Nihil Obstat:

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