

of your restless desire and knavish fear
 hide you from yourself
 smoulder between you and other creatures
 since your hands have learnt to hold aloof
 not to snatch
 greedily
 since your feet are kept at a distance
 by a Burning Bush
 since everywhere
 you come upon a " holy land "
 within yourself
 between yourself and all that is made.

See how the nobility of your Service
 of the Divine Majesty
 and your consequent poise
 in face of all created things
 the passionless tenderness of your love
 raises you to heights
 of a full-grown humanity
 undreamed-of before
 fashioning you into the man
 of God.

(To be Continued)

THE NEW LIFE

BY

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Those who are received into the Church later in life lack an inestimable privilege. Not for them the intimacy of long acquaintance, nor the memories of a childhood spent at their mother's knee, not for them the almost imperceptible growth in an atmosphere perfectly adapted to the needs of their soul. It is only with faltering footsteps, not rarely after some profound crisis, that the convert approaches the Church, conscious of his defects, yet eager to learn. Then, as he meets the Teaching Church, this desire will quickly deepen into love, a love which seeks expression in manifold ways. It is true he may discover no new features in the well-loved face. But as Her perfections are infinite, Her praise admits of endless variations.

It was seven or eight years ago, I believe, in the Cathedral of Cologne, with its vast spaces and soaring pillars, its lofty chapels and the majestic aloofness of the High Altar, that the meaning of

the word "House of God" first dawned on me. Unlimited space moulded into the austerity of form, exuberance of life disciplined by perfect order, infinite variety in complete harmony. This was indeed a mansion worthy of the Most High, with places set apart for various purposes, each of profound significance, all worthy of further exploration. It is true, the faithful who pursued their different errands in this vast building were dwarfed by the grandeur in which the overwhelming majesty of God became outwardly visible. It seemed to matter little that they were there. Yet, even so, I cannot but recall a strange feeling of wonder at the ease with which they moved in a house, the presence of whose Divine Host, though invisible, was everywhere manifest.

When endeavouring to render an account of recent experiences the analogy which presents itself most readily is that of the cripple whose limbs, at the Divine command, are straightened. It is inevitable that the soul, which, maybe through no fault of her own, has dwelt far from the courts of God, should need such straightening. Coming as she does from that travesty of life which existence outside the Church must necessarily mean, she must undergo a process of re-orientation, in which pain and pleasure are strangely mingled. Pain on contemplating the long lost years, pleasure at the fulfilment of a desire which, though unrecognised, was ever latent in the heart. It is only looking back that the true significance of this desire is understood—that longing for a life worthy of the name, in which things would have their rightful place, values their true relationship, and man his original dignity. The world being as it is, these hopes were often enough dismissed as vain fantasies. Yet there remained that faint echo of another world; the key to which seemed for ever lost. With what awe and delight, then, on realising that such a life is possible, does the soul set out to explore her newly discovered realm.

Words fail to express the feeling of liberation when at last she passes from the region of "doxai" to the kingdom of truth, from the haste and bustle of modern life to the spaciousness of an outlook *sub specie aeternitatis*, from her own short-breathed exultations to the calm steady pulse of liturgical worship. Wherever she turns she will find evidence of the original fitness of things, obscured, maybe, but never destroyed. She will find justice tempered with mercy, and, above all, she will find complete understanding. A lifetime could be spent in praising the wisdom of the Church, the understanding with which She meets the penitent, the appreciation which assigns to even the feeblest

of efforts its rightful place, Her firmness in the rejection of error, and the infinite love with which each failing member is pursued. Even her strictest ordinances will soon prove to be inspired by profound wisdom, and the harshest of Her demands revealed as nothing but a safeguard to protect some ineffable mystery.

Alone in the Church does man become truly man, for God is wholly found in the Church alone. It is true, nature may reveal Him in parts, the sublimity of philosophical argument lead to the very steps of His throne, love may unlock the gates of the sanctuary—but it is only to His Church that the fulness of revelation has been granted. Hence She derives Her uncompromising dignity and sweet humility, hence Her eternal youth and Her age-old wisdom, hence Her exclusiveness and Her charm. Wholly pervaded by the spirit of Her master, She is fragrant with a sweetness not of this world. All Her rich graces, the appropriateness of Her institutions, the eminence of Her theology, the beauty of Her art, the glory of Her saints, are nothing but a reflection of the radiance of Him Who is Her Lord. To this end She was created that the world through Her should find the way to the Father.

To be received into the Church means coming from the darkness of perpetual night into the dazzling splendour of noon, from the chill frost into the warm welcome of home, from poverty to a superabundance of riches. Small wonder, then, that the soul should for a while be numb and motionless like a small frozen bird before the fire, which dare not stir lest the warm glow should prove an illusion; and so remain, till at length, as the warmth penetrates more deeply, she begins to tingle with renewed life. How overwhelming the realisation that what fascinated the intellect and fired the imagination can satisfy the heart. That this vast system of ordinances, this imposing hierarchical organisation, this truly "Catholic" Church, which embraces all mankind and reaches into eternity, that She, far from being a mere structure of stone, impressive only by virtue of its grandeur, is throbbing with Divine life, a veritable School of Love. Submitting in love and obedience to the healthful discipline of the Church, the soul will gradually learn the purpose of all Her institutions: to kindle, to protect and to foster love.

It is a source of perpetual wonder to her that in this vast pyramid with its graduated orders, the natural relationship of the higher and the lower should be reversed. Here the more exalted seeks expression in ever lowlier service, and the Holy Father himself

rejoices to be no more than the "Servant of the servants of God." How, indeed, could it be otherwise in the Bride of Him Who was born in a stable, Who waits patiently on every altar, and does not disdain to enter the house of the humblest believer. If the ineffable love of the Creator could only find full expression in the "kenosis" of the incarnation, should not the Church, and in Her all the faithful bear witness to the same Divine law?

As the soul is drawn closer to the heart of the Church and becomes versed in the ways of love, she will understand ever more fully the beauty and rightness of this law. She will learn to see all things in their due proportion. And as she finds herself kneeling at the altar to receive her Lord, she will realise her own nature: to be one among many, only thus able to reach her full stature, and yet not lost in the multitude, but singled out, one day to be given a new name, known only to herself and to her Maker. This realization fills her with profound gratitude and humility. And when, overcome by her own inability to offer unto God the praises which are His due, she would almost despair, she will find consolation in the thought that many, worthier by far than she, will take up the song of praise, and that only the united worship of all His creatures can render the homage demanded by the infinite majesty of the Creator.

To love and worship God at all times and in all places is the very meaning of life. And as the soul entrusts herself to the guidance of the Church, she will be led into the Presence of Him Whose grace alone can bring this about. In the clear light which penetrates even into those deep crevices where the shadows dwell, she will begin to see herself as God sees her, and as she casts upon Him the burden of Her shame, there will be kindled within her the desire for an ever closer union with Him. Then, slowly, a space will grow where the Divine Guest may find a resting place, and, so coming, transform her into His own likeness. In ready response to a call which once fell muffled upon her ear and now rings with impelling clarity, she will prepare herself to meet Him, rejoicing in her own poverty, accepting all things gladly from Him.

Of the new life which now begins, only little can be said. For as prayer is gradually emptied of words, and in the Divine Presence all faculties are hushed into awe, when time lapses into eternity and the boundaries of space are transcended, the soul withdraws into herself and will not be tempted to reveal her secrets. Yet there are times when she overflows with an exultant joy, in which

gratitude and adoration are mingled, and love waxes hot within her. Then she would fain exceed the limitations of her nature and desire suffering as her portion, that she may be utterly spent to the glory of Him Who created her. All her gifts she would devote to His service and eagerly ask for more that she might have the more to give. In all things she will find traces of Him who made them, in the beauty of nature a dim reflection of the Divine perfections, in all music an echo of the heavenly choirs, and in human kindness a shadow of His love. Loving life because He hallowed it by choosing it for His own, she will gladly bear the sweet burden of each day—and then those Divine visitations, when in an agony of bliss she wrestles with her Creator—"Nay go, nay stay—spare us, Good Lord"—till both dread and desire of the creature are merged into the perfect acceptance of the threefold, *Domine, non sum dignus*.

The Church is ever on guard lest the flame thus enkindled should grow into a consuming fire, destructive instead of purifying. And rightly so. By the various forms of liturgical worship, by Her prayers, and the disciplined form of Her ritual, she endeavours to fashion the soul into the shape of the *homo Christianus*. The measured rhythm of the Gregorian chant serves this purpose no less than the austerity of the Latin tongue, this "language of marble," with its majestic cadences and perfect phrasing, where the soul loves to linger, and so lingering, is formed. Imperceptibly almost, as she passes from the vernacular to Latin, she acquires a new outlook and a new measure of perfection. As she grows familiar with the great prayers of the Church, she realises with increasing joy how perfectly they express the religious sentiments of all ages. She will then seek to adapt herself more completely to these great forms till at length they will be a true expression of the new life within her.

This new life is no mere illusion. Far from it. It grows within the natural life which remains with all its sorrows and sufferings. Yet the soul is not left without consolation. Trusting that some day her sufferings may be joined to those of the Sacred Heart, she patiently awaits the day when the nostalgia of the exile will be transformed into the universal longing for the heavenly home, when peace will dawn upon a world ready to obey its Creator, and she may find true harmony of spirit in the embracing unity of the Catholic Church.

Credo in unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam.
