

the way of preaching by word of mouth from the height of a soap box, but certainly by some form of intensive prayer and liturgical life, of reaching out to all kinds of action. The Church sends every Catholic into the mission field to spread the kingdom; the mission flags when we assume, sitting in our comfortable pew in church, that the kingdom has already been established.

THE EDITOR.

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE POST-CHRISTIAN

A CULTURED priest of my acquaintance has remarked to me more than once that the penny Catechism, with all its virtues, is out of date. Many of its precise definitions and carefully chosen texts are aimed at a Bible Protestantism which hardly anyone believes in. On the other hand, difficulties which the modern convert is apt to raise are not met, and the standard 'companions' to the Catechism do not always help. Similar objections apply, I believe, to a great deal of recent apologetic writing. Brilliant and compelling as it can be—I am thinking of books like *The Everlasting Man*—it frequently fails in two respects. First, it often does not carry the battle on to the ground where the modern intelligentsia choose to fight. This was the complaint made by Professor Haldane against Mr Arnold Lunn, and the same could have been said, perhaps with more justice, in a number of other controversies. Secondly, an apologist labours under the immense handicap that whereas he is inside the Church, most of the people to whom his work is addressed are outside—and not only outside the Church, but outside what is popularly called Christianity. It is a testimony to Catholicism that it transforms one's thinking even when it does not transform one's life; but the difference must be paid for. Catholic spokesmen suffer from being Catholic. They try to communicate a vision which can only be had from within; and this is the business of the artist, not the apologist. When a few judicious phrases in the outsider's language would be enough to establish contact, they perplex him by talking in their own. The sympathetic inquirer who wanders into a Catholic bookshop usually departs a trifle less sympathetic, and therefore less disposed to inquire.

With the utmost deference, and simply because I have had a few opportunities of observing conversions and hearing the debates *pro* and *con*, I wish to suggest one or two ways in which the practice of apologetics can be better adapted to our Post-Christian society.

The prime necessity is to understand what happens in modern

minds that do turn to the Church. This is a problem capable of objective study. Apart from the published statements of Chesterton, Gill, Merton and others, an investigator could obtain guidance from converts' associations; notably the one in America. There is no cause to conjure up the dismal prospect of a succession of Ph.D. theses on 'The Psychology of Conversion'. Doubtless the soul's workings in its highest quest cannot be analysed. However, the map of its pilgrimage can be drawn without falsifying the experience, and the map, rather than the pilgrim, is what the investigator needs to examine.

The results of the inquiry would be extremely valuable. But one reason, I repeat with confidence, why Catholic apologetics usually fail to find their mark is that they are too Catholic. The C.T.S. pamphlets will illustrate my point. There you may find an array of admirable and indeed indispensable arguments tending to prove that the teaching of the Church is true. Now the question 'Is it true?' is admittedly the master question, as any instructed Catholic appreciates; but, as a matter of fact, it is a question which hardly any modern non-Catholic ever asks, until he has become interested for other reasons. I do not know whether people imagine that science has already settled it in the negative, or whether propaganda and psychoanalysis have ousted the idea of truth from their thoughts. But in millions of minds the divorce of fact and religion is an accomplished thing. Here is a crude example. The Pope may announce shortly that St Peter's tomb has been discovered at Rome. A hundred years ago this discovery would have been recognised as a blow to Protestantism. Today, most Protestants would be sincerely amazed at the suggestion that it made any difference.

In the words of C. S. Lewis, the characteristic modern heresy is *Christianity And* (supply 'the Crisis', 'Socialism', or whatever your pet interest may be). Modern man does not ask 'Is it true?' but 'Is it good?' or 'What effect does it have on so-and-so?' The Church is attacked for being reactionary or authoritative or stultifying or aggressive, or for a hundred other sins, but hardly ever for being a liar. An apologist who devotes himself, say, to the Apostolic Succession in Sixteenth-Century England bears an unfortunate resemblance to the builders of the Maginot Line: he is throwing up impregnable fortifications on a frontier where the enemy does not want to invade. Many converts have been drawn to the Church in the first instance by her moral or social doctrines, though approval of these doctrines is no sufficient motive for becoming a Catholic. It was one of the glories of the great Jesuit missionaries that they saw the need for meeting the pagan on his own ground and showing how Christians could excel in those human

qualities which the pagan valued. Modern Utilitarianism may be a curse, but it does prevail, and if a wavering agnostic says 'What use is the Pope?' it is merely irritating to answer. 'The Epistles of St Clement, on the admission of the Protestant Bishop Lightfoot, furnish evidence of Roman authority in apostolic times'.

This necessity of adapting oneself to the audience is all the more urgent because the Faith is not a neutral thing. It is a challenge, and it repels. In a country still vaguely Liberal, the thinking Catholic needs to be on his guard against the notion that the surrounding hostility is pure prejudice, and that the Church would be attractive if only the history books and newspapers would be fair to her. Granted, they are not fair. But even if they were, and if the Church were seen as she really is, she would still rouse anger and hatred, for anger and hatred from the world are part of her birthright. The Church is not attractive, or nice, or respectable; and please God she never will be. Her apologists cannot coax. They must convict modern Man of failure. They must hem him round with a stubborn circle of facts till only one road lies open. It is not in the tale of St Francis Xavier's mass baptisms, but in *The Hound of Heaven*, that the typical modern convert will find his history.

Now the sort of dismissal which the Faith gets at the hands of somebody like Mr Hamilton Fyfe (whom I quote) is that 'it didn't deliver the goods'. The obvious and proper reply, so obvious and proper that it fails repeatedly to be made, is 'What goods?' When you get a Protestant or a Marxist to answer this question at all—which you cannot always, for the structure of reasoned anti-Catholicism is sometimes almost incredibly feeble—you will often find that he wants to identify the Faith with social revolution or cosmopolitanism or cleanliness, and that this favourite idol of his represents the 'Real Teaching of Christ', which the Church, of course, has betrayed. If he makes the latter claim, the task of exploding his pretensions is easy, for most people nowadays do not read the Gospels; they occasionally open the New Testament and proceed to contemplate their own preconceptions. In any case, the resultant argument will not be conclusive. It will leave him bewildered and annoyed. But you can plant two seeds in his mind, the seed of inquiry into the validity of his standards, and the seed of doubt about that persistent and obscurantist phantom the 'Real Teaching of Christ'. His inquiry may suggest to him that his standards are hardly self-evident enough to justify him in judging everyone else by them; such a realisation is much easier to induce now than it was in the heyday of Progress. His doubt may lead him, through attempts to buttress his own position, into a study of the Bible. Similarly, I have known a Comparative Religionist

who was led to the Church *via* the vain attempt to prove his facile assertion that everything in Christianity could be paralleled in other religions.

More formidable, and happily more common, than the man with an axe to grind is the decent and honest soul who declares that Catholics are no better than other people—are, in fact, worse, on the average. As Monsignor Knox has observed, this accusation is exceedingly difficult to rebut. The familiar reply that 'the corruption of the best is the worst' will not commend itself to outsiders. I think a triple line of defence can be sketched.

First, if crime statistics are cited, it is legitimate to answer that most Catholics are poor and that the poor get into trouble with the police more often. Second, there is the larger consideration that the truly faithful Catholic is indubitably better than anyone else; and, to quote Mr Sheed, the efficacy of a medicine is to be judged from those who take it. Even Dr Inge has conceded the unique sanctity of the best souls in the Roman communion; and it was Chesterton who pointed out that the Church has preserved, in the Religious Orders, the means for that complete renunciation and revolution to which some Christians are called, whereas her enemies have sneered at her for doing so even while lamenting the alleged disappearance of the saintly spirit. But, granted the record of the saints, an unbeliever may rejoin, 'What use is a saint?' On an issue like this, the apologist must take special care not to err from that excessive Catholicity I mentioned before. The worth of a life like that of Henry Suso or St John of the Cross is not apparent outside the Church. The agnostic merely scoffs at the former's austerities or the latter's levitations, and I think he is within his rights. A most useful weapon would be a book of saints who are capable of impressing the modern public. We have lately witnessed the potency of St Vincent de Paul in this respect. Other natural choices are St Francis, St Thomas More (who is still claimed as a Socialist hero), and St Louis. Once the agnostic's prejudices have been partly corrected by the example of saints like these, he can go on to appreciate St Thomas Becket, St Teresa of Avila, St Dominic, and even St John Vianney. But it is no use confronting him at the outset with a nineteenth-century Frenchman who fought devils in his study, refused to go an afternoon's ride to see the new railway, and was reluctant to smell a rose. You must first show patiently why you do not think this holy Frenchman insane.

The third line of defence against the attack on Catholics' behaviour is strictly modern, and, so far as I know, it has not yet been systematically prepared. It is the sociological line, and thorough research could be advantageously devoted to its prepara-

tion. What really are the characteristics of Catholic society? of Protestant society? of Post-Christian society? of pagan society? of officially apostate society? The topic is far too vast to do more than glance at. However, one or two possible strong points are worth noting. The officially apostate societies of modern times, namely the German and Soviet dictatorships, are evidently not good arguments for the destruction of Christianity. (By the way, it would effect a minor revolution in the ideas of many Socialists if they could be convinced that Hitler did persecute the Church.) The case for Catholic society is less easy to argue; everybody has heard of those fatal borderlines in Holland and Switzerland where you pass—or are said to pass—from sanitation and industry to slack squalor as you go from the Protestant to the Catholic area. But I should guess that a genuinely objective survey would tell in the Church's favour. You will find, I believe, more suicide, more neurosis, and more abnormality in the nominally Protestant countries. At any rate, the matter is worth investigation, and I see no reason to be afraid of the truth.

The other great charges against the Church—that she is reactionary, and that she is hostile to science and to the human intellect generally—are beyond the scope of this article, but enough has been said to indicate the proposed mode of defence. First, analyse the charge, and see what the opponent offers instead, and what he grumbles at the Church for resisting. To Communism this process would be absolutely damning, if Communists could be persuaded to debate against Catholics, which, in England at least, they are afraid to do. Then counter the charge with facts. In the discussion of 'reaction', it would be possible, by means of a suitably compiled handbook, to prove that Catholics who really followed the lead of Rome would seldom be open to the charge; that the oppression, where it is real, invariably starts lower down, and is thus a kind of rebellion. In the discussion of the Church's hostility to science, the corresponding handbook could well recall, not only the achievements of Catholic scientists like Mendel and Pasteur, but the permanence and solidity of those achievements beside the toppling towers of speculation built up by scientists whose minds the Faith has not ordered.

I do not pretend, of course, to be putting forward anything novel. All the proposals I have made here have certainly been made elsewhere, and, to some extent, acted on. But plenty more must be done, and, in particular, the scope of apologetic must be considerably broadened, if the opportunity presented by the divisions of the modern mind is not to be lost.

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