

My Faith and I

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IT was my great good fortune to be born into the Catholic Church. I say it was my great good fortune; for, though I admire from my heart the exuberant enthusiasm of converts and envy them the freshness of the unexplored vistas opening before them, I often wonder if I should have had the courage to climb the steep, rough road by which most of them have mounted to the Faith. Faith was a gift to me, the first of many, and the mother of all.

Yet, Catholic born, I also had the good fortune to spring from a paternal line solidly Protestant. I call this good fortune, for it has given me something of the viewpoint of a convert. My father's father, standing in his Presbyterian pulpit, Bible in hand, preaching the stern faith of the Dutch Reformed Church, remains a vivid memory of my early childhood, as the charm and graciousness of his delightful personality, and grand humanness of his wit, and his comradeship with a youngster just approaching his sixth birthday have been through the years a warm and carefully-tended flame at which I often hold my hands.

The memory of my father's gradual finding of the Faith (first in my mother's unanswerable example, then in the Requiem Mass of her Irish and devout mother, then in the persuasive logic of a great Paulist, and, finally, at the fatherly hands of a dear old parish priest) dates from my college days.

And, though I regret that my English forebears gave up their Faith, I am glad that Protestantism touched me closely enough to make me willing to try to understand it and its members, and perhaps be a little more tolerant of those not blessed, as I have been, with the white, shining, beautiful light that is the Catholic Faith.

Dearer With Years

Though my Faith was a gift, unmerited and unsought, it has come with years to be an increasingly dear possession, the firm core around which the certainties of life have crystallized. Its flame has risen with ever-brightening intensity. From the Faith have come all other good things of soul, and, in a very real sense, of mind and body.

Once again, I am deeply fortunate. Others with the same gift have seen the hard pressure of immediate realities, the wearisome struggle for bread and bed, the irritating rub of unpleasant men and uncongenial surroundings, a life too preoccupied or harassed for thought or study or reading, wear down their faith and dull the warmth and brightness of its flame. Over the light of Faith rough hands have been placed with brutal insistence, snuffing out the flame so hard to rekindle.

But my faith burned on. There were moments when a very hurricane of doubt tossed the flame perilously. There were the terrified, questioning days when, as a young man still in college, I reached out for the thrill of a dangerous book or the fascinating peril of an argument for which I knew no answer. Arguments, indeed, have been flung against my Faith for which during long years

I continued to see no answer; but in the end, if the answer was slow in coming, I saw the argument crumble of its own dead weight to dust.

Once, after too violent a flirtation with the blatant unbelief that saturated parts of the literature of the first decade of the 20th century, I wondered if I were still a Catholic; and the moment of questioning was followed almost immediately by the high call to the religious life. More than merely faith had remained.

Under Fire

This is not an autobiography; nor is it a spiritual Odyssey. It is just a quiet, heartfelt tribute to my Church and its Faith, and an acknowledgement of all that it has meant to me, and means to me more than ever today.

For, living in a world where intellectual doubt rides a seemingly triumphant chariot, drawn by ramping horses of passion, inclination, thoughtlessness, resentment of authority, I see my Church peppered (there is no more dignified word) by the toy artillery of unbelief. The shells which that artillery throws fall harmless before the impregnable Church; but the noise of the explosive that fires them is loud and violent.

In my dealing with the young people among whom lies my happy work, I must watch the troubled look that comes into the eyes of a few of them when a new book announces, with all the shyness of a cock on a dunghill, the swift demise of the Catholic Church, or when the headlines of the daily paper run black with her obituary notices, as some rebellious Catholic or Catholic land sells out for the moment to Communists or anti-clericals or the Grand Orient.

I must occasionally see fine young fellows sadly leaving a Faith they have never really understood, because of some argument they have not begun to grasp, the answer to which is perhaps too profound and deeply beautiful to be fathomed by their, as yet, immature minds.

I must see young women, whom I have watched taking honours at their colleges, turn regretfully from the Catholic Church because its stern morality stands between them and a passing fashion in vice which propaganda and literature have called virtue or necessity or the advancement of the human species: and all the while the great Catholic Church has been placing its stern morality, not between these young women and their happiness and advancement, but between them and the wolves of the world, white-fanged and bloody-jawed, whose sole and rotten purpose is to tear to shreds the virtue of womanhood, modelled on the immaculate Mother of God. History, long after these young women are dead, will relate how the Catholic Church fought for homes, inviolate virtue, the rights of unborn children, the decencies of life, and for that purity of virgins and mothers by which the world rises above the level of its own bestial desires.

I have lived to see the Church I love attacked by laughter and ridicule, by specious science and the most arrant lies, by nickel pamphlets and scholarly-looking tomes, by fallen Catholics who thought its truth unsound after they had found its Commandments difficult, and by brilliant cynics, whose cleverness against the Church is easier because they know nothing of its ideals, its true history, its dogma, and its white-hot love of God and men. Politics make strange bed-fellows, but they are perfectly matched compared with those who are united only by their hatred of the Catholic Church.

This booklet, then, is written as it would be written to a very dear son or daughter who said: "But what has the Church really meant to you? Why do you say you love your Faith? What will it give to me?" And though it would take volumes to answer even a fraction of that, matching my words

against the swift flow of young life and knowing that, like Rosalind, they would in one word be told of the fullness of love, I answer them thus:

Promise and Prophecy

Once in a not-too-distant past the most brilliant and commanding Figure in all history stood among a little group of inadequates. Deliberately He seems to have chosen inadequates, so that the prophecy and promise He was about to make might be the more astounding in its fulfilment.

"You are Peter," He said, quietly, " and upon this rock I shall build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

And then, in the Magna Charta of Catholicity , He said to that ragged group, whose speech was rough as the tempest into which they had shouted, and whose hands, newly consecrated for sacrament and mystery and blessing, were tough and callous from the ropes and oars of fishermen's craft: "Who hears you hears Me; and who despises you despises Me."

With these words my Church was born. To Peter, first of the Popes, was the promise given; he, the hesitant, bragging betrayer of his Master, was still the rock against which hell itself would beat in vain; and henceforth his words were the words of the most marvellous Person of all time; his voice, even when it spoke in faulty Greek, was the voice of Jesus Christ.

Not to Luther or Calvin or John Knox or Mrs. Eddy, born long centuries afterwards, were these words spoken; not to Voltaire or Darwin or Huxley or Karl Marx or the confessedly-infallible H. G. Wells; not to any of the thousand heresiarchs who rose to claim divine guidance and inspiration and more than a divine knowledge of things of earth and things of eternity. Though they thundered their half-truths and queer distortions and pseudo-science in voices that out-shouted and drowned the voice of Papal pronouncements, the promise and prophecy was not for them.

Dying Thunders

So their futile thunder sank to a faint echo and died away behind the everlasting hills. Their crushing doctrines were pulverized under the slow weight of the years, or remained, as the pyramids remain, for history to marvel at their mighty uselessness.

Thus perished the doctrines of Arius that once threatened to capture the Christian world. "Faith without works," on which Protestantism based its first spirited assault against the Church, reversed itself and became the modern Protestant dogma of "works without faith," "It doesn't matter what you believe, provided you do right." Thus perished utterly the deism that Voltaire offered the world to replace "this infamous thing," the Church; and the world has lived to see Darwin's triumphant Natural Selection pushed aside, even by the most enthusiastic supporters of evolution.

But all the while the voice of the white shepherd of Christendom keeps repeating the unchanged words of Christ, in the very voice and accents of Christ; and when today the Pope, Peter's successor, the head of my Church, speaks, the world, willing or unwilling, listens. He alone dares to claim the infallible authority of the Divine Teacher.

Not one of that long list of heretics but would have given his soul for the calm authority that rings in the voice of the least prepossessing successor of St. Peter. They know that their voices are the voices of men, however clever or glib or persuasive or eloquent. His voice is the voice of Him Who said: "Who hears you hears Me."

Firm

Only the man who knows nothing of history trembles as a new wave breaks against the rock of Peter. Once the assault of error troubled me. I have studied history to reassuring purpose. For Christ's prophecy has been proved in every century since the day of its utterance. Each new massed attack is just the latest of that unending series of breakers that have arisen, smashed with apparently destructive violence against the rock, and then, in curling eddies and froth, slunk back, to be swallowed up in an oblivious ocean.

So the resistless Roman Empire flung itself against the infant Church and broke itself in twain. So came the matchless armies of Arianism that pushed a Pope from his throne. So marched the lances of Islam that pierced the heart of Christian Europe. So came the Albigenses (almost forgotten name for a completely forgotten mass of error). So came the petty princes of Germany and the war lords of England and the Covenanters of Scotland, leagued to drive the "Scarlet Woman" from her seven hills. So, with new weapons and a subtler sort of warfare came the Encyclopaedists of France and the materialists of the 18 sixties and seventies, only to be forgotten within their own generation.

Unbroken Still

So today in the 1950s, comes the Soviet, [in China, Korea, Vietnam, Cuba and elsewhere] consecrated by a vow to the "god out of a machine" that has supplanted the true God, to blot Faith from the earth. So, too, in our own time, come the forces of modern unbelief, working in press and classroom, in theatre and laboratory, and on news-stand, to level the citadel of the Church and sow salt within its fields.

But the Rock stands; the waves recede and history, with difficulty, finds their traces in the shifting sands of the beach; or, if you prefer less figure and more fact, I'll shift position to you. Suppose you tell me what the beliefs of Arius were or why the Stoics of Rome fought the Church. Recount the chief beliefs of the Albigenses, and show me that infant damnation, the slave will, the Bible as the sole rule of Faith, the supremacy of princes over the Church are still Protestant doctrines. These doctrines and a thousand others are rolled back and gone forever from the memory of all but scholars. The Rock remains.

So when each new doubt or form of unbelief shouts out its half-truth or new-found error, or digs up and resuscitates some buried heresy (as Modernism did), [and neo-Modernism does,] we, who know something of how history has been the fulfilment of Christ's prophecy, have no fear. History early taught me that much. The Church that 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.

Never Wrong

Show me one other institution in the world that has done the same and I will pay it the homage of my soul. Judaism is no longer the religion of Moses or of the Palestine of Christ's period. Read the Jewish Encyclopaedia and you will wonder if the Jews of Talmudic days would recognize their kinship with their modern, free-thinking, sceptical successors. Lutheranism is not the faith that Luther founded, nor is the creed of Episcopalianism [Anglicanism] any longer that of the church of Henry Tudor and Elizabeth.

Why, the scientific theories of the minute, where they are at odds with Catholic Faith, are no more the scientific theories that attacked the Church in the last quarter of the last [19th] century than they are the science of Egyptian magicians and Assyrian astrologers.

To my astonishment, I learned that of the dogmas on which other churches were founded scarcely one survives in them today. Most of the major scientific hypotheses announced a half-century ago are today supplanted by new theories as violently and infallibly maintained. [This is as true today as it was in 1958.]

And 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.

Mother of Europe

History has been used relentlessly against the Catholic Church, but it has been history written, not with an eye to truth, but with an eye to the harm that could be done Catholicity. I know that my Church is the mother and maker of modern civilization. Every great nation of modern Europe is its child. For centuries France boasted herself the Eldest Daughter of the Church. England, when Augustine came with the Faith to unite warring kingdoms into the eventual mistress of the sea, was proud to be called Mary's Dower. The scattered forest tribes of Germany were joined by the Faith into the empire which regarded itself as the temporal counterpart of the Papacy. Italy, Spain, Poland, the Scandinavian kingdoms that have forgotten their mother (read Sigrid Undset for the truth of this), Scotland, martyred Ireland, are all her children.

The Reformers came, to find a finished, rounded, thoroughly-organized Europe, complete in all essentials, as it has continued to our era. They destroyed only the binding principle of Faith and a common (Latin) language, and the heart-satisfying liturgy that knit together nations into the family of Christendom. They set nation against nation in the bitterest of enmities, added hatred of other nations to the already-existing love of one's own land, and sowed the seeds of World Wars and the more tragic war that is now being waged. [the Cold War.]

Proudly I read the history of the Catholic Church. My Church beat a rotting paganism by the purity of martyrs and virgins, who gained their purity from the same Eucharist that is mine. My Faith was the one light that shone in the welter of blood and rapine when the mercenaries of Rome cracked under the pressure of Teutonic invaders; and that Faith was the force that civilized the intruders and formed them into Christian people and European nations. My Faith led the centuries of warfare from Tours to Vienna, by which Europe was saved from Saracen and Turk. My Church was mother of the world's greatest universities, liberator of the slave, patron of the fine arts, first founder of hospitals and charitable institutions.

True History

This is, I am very well aware, not the history of the Church, as told, with cool disregard of facts, ever since the Protestant revolt, by those who hated the Church. But it is the history which Walter Scott recovered when he first opened the eyes of England to the glorious vitality of the Middle Ages and fathered, himself unconscious of the fact, the Catholic revival. It is the true history that led Sigrid Undset back into the Church, whose early history in Norway her father had thoroughly explored. It is the reason why historians, in steadily-increasing numbers, realizing the indisputable

evidence of Catholic influence in the Middle Ages, are coming into the Catholic Church as enthusiastic converts.

The systematic lies of three hundred years and more were needed to blind readers and students to the fact that the Catholic Church was, and is, the greatest mother in the world.

History, as I came to see it, is beautiful and significant, and begets in me a just pride as I realize that, compared with my Church, all other churches, and, for that matter, all the nations of the earth, are parvenus, and that membership in the Catholic Church gives me kinship with the world's greatest men and women.

Glorious Kinfolk

All the saints are my brothers and sisters, born of that same great mother. For all the saints were Catholic. Four great names, their bearers watching in graven dignity above the door of England's greatest Cathedral, stand out in the history of the Church of England: Augustine, Dunstan, a'Becket, and Cranmer. Of the four, three are saints and Catholic. The fourth is the contemptible Cranmer, and the Anglican Church may claim him if it will.

From the days of the Reformation no saint has been added to the calendar of saints which some Protestant sects took over from the Catholic Church, while the ranks of Catholic sainthood grow with the years. From Peter to the Little Flower and the Cure d'Ars the saints are ours; and each Catholic can say personally: "They are mine." The agnostic leaders of the modern France of the third, fourth, and fifth republics, raise their silk hats to honour as their nation's heroes two Catholic saints, Joan of Arc and Louis the Crusader.

There have been, of course, noble and splendid men and women not of the Catholic Faith, who have been such true lovers of God and their fellow-men as Wesley and Keble, Florence Nightingale and Clara Barton. But the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Church alone, has been, and dares claim to be, the Mother of Saints.

Sons of the Church

Names are important to us only because we, who live surrounded by men and women not of our Faith, sometimes come to wonder if the world's great are consistently non-Catholic. In contrast with the immediate present, history, as it lists its greatest, gives the emphatic impression of Catholic dominance. The names in "Who's Who in America" may be predominantly of other faiths; Catholics dominate the "Who's Who" of world history.

For fifteen hundred years there was scarcely a great name written across the records of European achievement in any line but that name was Catholic. From the first pagan philosophers converted to the Faith, from Augustine and the great doctors of the Church down to Dean Colet and Thomas More, and the critical, but finally faithful, Erasmus, scholarship was Catholic. The great rulers and law-makers and fashioners of modern civilization were Catholic.

The marching armies of Europe were led by Catholic heroes: Constantine, opening Rome to the Faith; Charles Martel, halting the progress of that militant Islam called Mohammedanism after its founder; Bayard, the whitest of the knights; Richard the Lionhearted; and gay, gallant Henry V, chiefest of England's heroes; the Crusaders, who died for an ideal that ultimately saved Europe's civilization.

Catalogues make dull reading, so I only gesture towards the great discoverers and explorers who opened up a new world and carried the Cross with them; the pioneers who wrote the Litany of Saints in the names of American cities; the painters, whose work filled first Catholic cathedrals and now fills the museums of the civilized art world; the architects, whose names are buried in a forgotten past, but whose genius rises in the immortal stone of mankind's grandest buildings; Caxton, inventor of the printing press; Chaucer, gay sire of English literature; Dante, greatest name among the poets; Cervantes, father of the modern novel; Moliere, founder of modern drama; Aquinas, from whose stupendous mind was born the only philosophy by which a civilization has ever lived; Roger Bacon, from whom all modern science takes its rise.

I gesture and pass on. There they stand, those magnificent brothers of mine, with successors in every generation; the gallant, glorious gallery of the Church's sons and daughters; greatest in mind, in ideal, in aspiration, and in achievement; and Foch, Mercier, Pasteur, Mendel, Millet, Papini, Paderewski are of their line.

Today

But, as I began to hint, we cannot live in history any more than a slightly-tarnished gentleman can live in the golden, if vanished, traditions of his broken family or his fallen race. What does my Faith mean today? After all, it is less important to us of the present (though vastly reassuring) to know that from Catholic hands the Reformers took the printing press, which they used against the Faith they had abandoned, than to know what the Catholic books of the present coming from that same printing press offer of truth and guidance and beauty to today's questioning humanity. Proud as we are of the great cathedrals with which the Church filled Europe, we are far prouder of what goes on day by day within even the smallest and plainest of our Catholic churches.

And there I find the first deep personal satisfaction derived from my Faith. Not pride of history, but gratitude for intimate service dilates my heart. My Church has understood me, served me, tended me, made me in baptism the adopted child of God, given me in Holy Communion the living friendship of the Saviour, turned my body through confirmation into the temple of the Holy Ghost, blessed every significant action of my life, and hastened to me, in every dread or need or pressing danger or sharp joy, with help and grace, entrusted to her hands by a tender and understanding Founder.

My Church, grand enough to be mother of the nations, is tender enough to be mother of the most insignificant man. As if the world were not its province, my Church has brooded with a mother's gentleness over me. The Catholic Church is as great as the universe; but its essential life can be lived in the sanctuary of my soul.

For Every Life

For my Church, whatever any man or woman may think of its truth, shows the deepest possible knowledge of the human heart and its desires and needs. It is simple; it is elaborate; it reaches directly the heart of the ignorant; it challenges the genius of the scholar.

I have heard flung as an argument against my Church that it lacks the simplicity of Christ. What nonsense! Fundamentally, Catholic worship is utterly simple, as simple as bread and wine offered on a table of stone are simple, simple as the pouring of water on the head of an infant, or the lifted hand of a priest absolving with the sign of the Cross.

It is simple as Christ was simple, and the daily needs of men are simple - prayer to begin the day; a blessing for son and daughter on the morning of their wedding; the quick response of the priest to the call of the sickbed, bearing the Bread that is the Body of the Lord; simple as a bell struck or a voice raised in song, or a wooden cross lifted in admonition to sorrow, or the final reassuring absolution of the dead; so simple that it charms a child, awakens confidence in a beggar, calms the dying, stirs the admiration of the truly great.

Fundamentally, too, it is as complete and satisfying as the comprehending heart of the Saviour could make it. There is no significant action from birth to death that is not consecrated by a Sacrament or marked with a special blessing.

Religion for us Catholics is not an affair to be put on with the frock coat of a Sunday morning. It goes with us into the most intimate details of life. It holds out its arms to the new-born child. It follows the bodies of the dear dead and blesses even the blanket of earth that rests upon them. My Church has reassuringly paced at my side through life.

We miss the whole point if we overlook the utter simplicity of Mass and baptism and confession. They are as truly all they claim to be when enacted by a priest in tattered vestments on a battlefield or on the deck of a sinking vessel as they are in the greatest cathedral when a Cardinal pontificates amid earth's imitation of the Church Triumphant.

Glory

For precisely in the spirit of this soaring imitation has the Catholic Church showed its flashing understanding of the human heart. Simplicity is not enough; a man must worship grandly. The home of the Catholic may be a poor little cottage; he adores God amid the splendours of earth. His week-day may be spent in some trivial, tiresome work; on Sundays and the great feasts he copies for a moment the dignity and splendour with which the seraphim adore their God.

Beauty in my Church's hands has become a radiant act of faith. Believing, first of all, that the finest of art is none too good for the world's Creator, the Church has built into her ritual all that is glorious in music, poetry, painting, architecture, together with dignity of movement, grace of posture, significance of symbolism, even the precious delight (so dear to the Protestant novelist) of perfumed incense. All this is simply the gratification of mankind's most natural impulse - the impulse to give back the best to the Best, the finest of His creatures to the Creator of them all.

But beyond that the Church feels that men and women, at the moment of adoration, need be freed from their sense-ridden attachment to the workaday world. So it elevates every one of their senses, raises the whole man out of himself, gives him exquisite music, and perfect symbols that promote his attention to the mystic action that goes forward at the altar.

The bare and deliberate ugliness of the Puritan meeting house failed to stand the test of time. Man naturally hated it and ultimately abandoned it. Today on Riverside Drive and Hollywood Boulevard Protestantism builds its best churches in perfect replica of Catholic styles, and its basically colourless ceremonial (from which, once on a time, even the organ was barred as the devil's whistle) takes on more and more the movement and richness and splendour that is essentially human and, in Catholic usage, definitely divine.

My Church's children need not go to the modern motion-picture palaces to find the beauty and splendour and art and resonance of organ tone in which the heart of man exults.

Christ's Work

All this is infinitely dear to the Catholic who understands the great realities that are encrusted with the beauty of art and ritual. He glories in the magnificent ceremonial that is man's tribute to God during the course of a Eucharistic Congress. But he is equally content to kneel in a little side chapel where a priest is offering up the Sacrifice of Calvary and the repetition of the Last Supper, in simplicity and prayerful quiet. For, beneath the art, every Catholic sees, as I have seen a thousand times, the unending repetition by the Church of just what Christ Himself did and ordered to be done till the end of time.

The Last Supper, each important word of which, in the Gospel tongue, had a sacrificial significance, is the Eucharistic Sacrifice of Calvary, repeated endlessly in the Mass. I see in Christ the priest according to the order of Melchisedec offering bread and wine, as the prophecy foretold, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. I have learned with deeper study that the Mass offered in each parish church is essentially the same Mass that was offered in the presence of departing Crusaders centuries before the Reformation smashed the altar of Sacrifice, the same Mass of which Augustine and Gregory wrote so beautifully, the very Mass that was said upon the tombs of the martyrs when the Church of the first centuries hid itself away under the streets of Rome.

"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them," Christ said to His Apostles, and in the quiet confessional the forgiveness of sins goes on endlessly. I have felt Christ's pardon as truly as did Peter or Magdalen or the stubborn Thomas.

"Preach the Gospel," He commanded, and from Catholic pulpits, sometimes eloquently, sometimes stammeringly, sometimes with power, and sometimes with defective speech, I have heard on each successive Sunday the same doctrines that Jesus Christ taught the eager multitudes, not the particular fancies of the preacher nor the transient interests of the day.

Christ's words, not the fleeting concern of the tabloids, are the text of Catholic sermons; and since first I mounted the pulpit in priestly state, I dared say only what I felt He would say. I was His unworthy mouthpiece to the multitudes.

For Humanity

And because He loved the poor and the weak, and with untiring gentleness tended the sick, the Church builds its hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged, refuges.

The modern mind prides itself on applying rigidly at least one principle of Jesus Christ: "By their fruits you shall know them." It would do well to apply that principle to the one Church that gathers the little ones of Christ at the knees of its teaching Sisterhoods for prayer, religious instruction, and the careful inculcation of the Beatitudes and the Commandments.

For my Church opens the welcoming doors of its hospitals to Christ's sick, shelters the forsaken orphan from the cold-hearted inhumanity of men, shields the Magdalen from the men who first pushed her into the gutter and then would stone her, closes the eyes of the forsaken aged in their last sleep.

I hear much talk nowadays that is shudderingly at odds with the charity of Christ. There is talk of lethal chambers, where unprofitable members of society will be painlessly killed. A savage euthanasia is suggested for the helpless old. Sterilization of the insane and mutilation of the criminal

is talked of in high courts. The doors of life are ruthlessly shut in the face of babies in an age that prides itself on making life eminently worth living.

The doctrine of the "survival of the fittest," loudly praised in my youth, has not had a pleasant sound in the ears of the frightened weak and sick and poor. The soft footfall of a Catholic Sister of Charity has come with reassuring gentleness. For, in the face of this thoroughly pagan inhumanity that is sweeping the world, those Sisters come, mercy and love as their twin angels. The Church recruits them in increasing numbers and they selflessly and tirelessly do Christ's work among the world's outcasts and forsaken. They repeat in every generation the moral miracle of Christ's charity and boundless love; and any seeing man may watch the miracle at work. As for myself, no one will ever know what the mere presence of the Sisters in my Church has meant to my faith.

My Faith Is Reasonable

Sometimes, in the face of parrot-like repetitions of the same names and the same authorities, I wonder if the only organization in the world using its own head isn't the Catholic Church. From the Sunday supplements, with their articles about what some obscure professor thinks of some other professor's discovery of the missing link, to the last Ph.D. thesis, packed with quotations from a hundred different authorities (and scholarship often seems measured in terms of footnotes), authority rules the world.

Of course, this is a much-ramified subject. I can give only the very briefest sketch of what I have learned of the reasonable logic and respect for the facts that I have found in my Faith. I can do no more than indicate the solid foundation of history and science and reason on which it rests. But it is important to know that, before the Catholic scholar begins the superstructure which rises into the presence of God, he has built firmly on philosophy and science and a love of common sense. Each priest, as he mounts to the priesthood, does so on a solid roadway of proved truth.

Catholic Faith, I have found, is considerably more than just faith. The theology that explains it is a highly-developed and specialized science. It has as its associate the only logical and reasonable philosophy by which a man can think and live and act. It would take volumes to illustrate all this, as it has taken years of study and training to demonstrate it to my none-too-docile mind.

At the very core of Catholic Faith, quite unknown and hence unappreciated and unaccounted for even by the well-educated non-Catholic, is the philosophy of Thomas of Aquin (Aquinas). Praising that philosophy is like commending Shakespeare's poetry. Will Durant regretfully - yes, he uses the word himself - included Aquinas among his world's great thinkers. Perhaps he actually ranks first.

Weigh and Test

With a clear grasp of Plato and Aristotle and the best of his predecessors, Aquinas weighs all the facts that precede and underlie faith. Calmly he asks if there is a God, and whether it is possible to prove the existence of any sort of Supreme Being. Before he speaks of saving souls, he goes about investigating if there are souls to save. There is little use of talking of an after life unless we are sure of immortality. "Are we?" he asks. The story of Christ is, basically, history; but Aquinas asks whether history is credible at all, and what right the Gospels have to claim to be true history.

That method set the standard of the approach which every really educated Catholic makes to his Faith. To the laborious and thoroughly-sifted arguments of Aquinas Catholic scholarship has added a constant investigation of the late findings of science and history and Biblical research; a

knowledge of what is current in scientific thought that is in striking contrast with science's almost complete ignorance of what makes up the great proved structure of Catholic truth.

Following the footsteps of Aquinas, the educated Catholic investigates what men have said for and against God's existence, why and with what reason psychologists of a sort have denied the fact of human souls, what proofs have been offered against the historic value of the Gospel according to St. John. Catholics give their adversaries every chance to say their say. Every thesis in Catholic philosophy and theology presents every important difficulty or argument against its truth.

I feel absolutely safe in wagering that a thoroughly-educated priest or a really-trained Catholic layman knows ten times as much about any form of Protestantism or modern scientific thought as the average Protestant scholar or scientist knows about Catholicity. I'll go better than that. I know from my own conversations that I have been better acquainted with the doctrines once held by Protestantism than ministers of the very faith we were discussing.

Protestantism begins by accepting a Book. Catholicity begins by proving there is a God capable of giving mankind such a Book. Unbelieving science begins by the dogma that theology is all stuff and nonsense, and that the supernatural cannot be proved. Catholic theology begins by accepting the proved facts of science and examining whether they do not (as they do) fit in with the facts of religion.

Mad Adversaries

There is no other philosophy that is as reasonable or as hospitable to new discoveries as Catholic philosophy. Protestantism and the modern world have given up this great and irrefutable body of truth, not because it is unsound philosophy, but because it is Catholic.

And, as the educated Catholic goes on with his studies, he finds himself faced, as I was faced, with a perplexing and almost comic situation. No two of his opponents agree. He finds that some say there is no God and others that there is nothing else but God; some that there are no souls, and others that there are no bodies; and there is no immortality, and that you can talk to a spirit through a medium's flying trumpet; that Jesus was a myth, and the greatest of men, a megalomaniac, and the sanest of teachers, who never said he was God and whose claim to be God proves Him insane; that all religions are equally good, and that all are equally stupid and foolish; that all ritual was originally sun worship or nature worship or phallic worship; that at the beginning all men believed in one God, and that no man believed in one God; that all philosophies are equally true, because what we believe to be true is true, and that all philosophies are equally false because we never can know anything about anything anyhow! Thank God for my Catholic sense of humour!

One Against the World

For what a mad kaleidoscope it is! While my Catholic philosophy, the rational basis of my faith, is sound and clear and one, I find that I am opposed, not by one consistent series of belief, but by a thousand dissonant divergent, contradictory, topsy-turvy theories, as changeable as the style of women's footwear and just a shade less practical and durable.

That, I must admit, was one of the great surprises of my life. It still is. The more I see of modern thinkers the more I know they agree in nothing except the one stridently proclaimed belief that the Catholic Church is wrong; and, believe me, as I look at that mad circus without one presiding ringmaster, I grow more and more satisfied with the calm, rational, provable, and proved

philosophy that the Church offers me. I return to my Catholic books as a man returns to his own familiar study after a jangling, uproarious afternoon in Bedlam.

Don't let them fool you with the impression that arrayed against Catholic truth is a solid and united army of religion, science, and philosophy. There isn't. Hardly can two scientists, once they pass the facts they can see under a microscope or appraise in logarithms, sit down to chat without running off down different theoretical roads or pulling noses. Any three philosophers in a smoking-car are pretty sure to represent as many entirely different types of thought - probably three different ideas about so fundamental a thing as whether a man can know anything positive about the world or God or himself or the pancakes on the breakfast table. They won't be sure whether they themselves are animals or slightly more complicated machines, or a mind that only thinks it has arms and legs and eyes, and wears rubber gloves and carries an umbrella. It sounds silly, but it is painfully, ludicrously true.

In the face of all this, my Church says, calmly: "You cannot all be right. Christ certainly did not teach all these different things. Truth cannot contradict itself. While you fight it out, suppose you stop calling me names and beating me with any stick that comes to hand. Truth is one; error is multiform. My truth is one, for it was born of Christ and lives by His Faith, fortified by common sense and reason."

Glorious Truths

On the magnificent structure of reasonable philosophy and genuine science is built the edifice of Catholic doctrine: "God, the Creator of the universe, is our tender and provident Father; He so loved us as to send His only-begotten Son to save mankind, that had rebelled against Him; that Son died for us, but not till He had established a Church and given it the Sacraments as channels of His grace and strength; beyond death is eternal life or eternal death, to be measured by one's conduct during an earthly probation; man is free to choose his own destiny; the Holy Spirit dwells in human hearts to give them the strength to make the right choice." Could anything be more sane, reasonable, beautiful, or fitting the dignity of man than these fundamental truths? Not one of them but lifts man up to new heights and gives him a sense of his importance in the universe and his place in God's eternal plan.

Sheer Stupidity

I have found that such Catholics as leave the Church, in the vast majority of cases, completely overlook these great fundamental truths, and are muddled by some misunderstood trifle. Of course, I am overlooking the tens of thousands who leave because the Church remembers the Sixth Commandment, and annoyingly repeats: "You shall not commit adultery." Nor the others who leave because they find the injunction "You shall not steal," too onerous in its manifold ramifications. Most losses of faith start, not with the mind, but with the emotions. There are people who reject Faith because they find it so hard to do the things their Faith demands.

But, while they overlook the fundamental truths, they urge as the reason for their departure some silly doubt - for instance, that a whale could have swallowed Jonah. They boggle at the idea of Adam's being punished for eating an apple. They think it incredible that Christ could have walked upon the water; or, more frequently nowadays, they say that evolution has done away with the need of a Creator.

If the departing doubters would take time to look about they would quickly find that the Bible says that God prepared a big fish; that it says nothing whatever about Adam's eating apples or peaches or bananas, but a great deal about his wanting to be like God and that there is in Catholic philosophy a whole important treatise on miracles proving that if God made nature He remains the Master of nature, even to the extent of changing its laws or interfering with its normal courses. Nor will they find that the theory of evolution any more eliminates the need of a Creator than the finding of a gift automobile in one's garage eliminates the need for Mr. Henry Ford.

Time-Tested

Stupidly, these men never remember or take into consideration the fact that every doctrine of the Church has been scrutinized most carefully, investigated in all its bearings, exposed to the most violent attacks from inside and outside the Church, and then, only because it was fundamentally in God's revelation or because some heretic persistently attacked it, was it imposed upon the mind of the faithful as explicitly to be believed. No organization has ever been so careful about the truths it proposed or so slow to reach a final decision as has the Church. Medical societies discussing new cancer cures, and religious convocations pronouncing haphazardly upon divorce laws, would learn much human prudence from the way in which the Church balances arguments and weighs difficulties before it finally promulgates a truth.

No wonder that in its two thousand years of teaching it has never had to retract a single point once defined as revealed truth; Remember that. Not one retraction! There's a record for the world to shoot at - and miss.

For outside the Catholic Church men, clever men and reputable scientists, spend half their lives retracting the things that during the other half they taught ex cathedra and with fulminations against the doubter. The speed with which religious errors and scientific hypotheses opposed to the Catholic Faith die is equalled only by the speed with which new ones are born.

Calmly, surely, with the certainty that Christ guides its steps and directs its words and that the indwelling Holy Spirit keeps it from possibility of doctrinal error, the Church goes the simple way of truth; and what is truth to-day was truth a thousand years ago, and will be truth when Broadway is buried under the sand-drifts of the centuries.

Three Worlds

Catholic truth pierces the next world and gives the Catholic glorious dogmas like the Communion of Saints, with its Church Triumphant in Heaven, its Church Militant on earth, its Church Suffering in purgatory - the dream of a true internationalist carried into three worlds.

Tenderly my Church searches out the immediate human need for mercy and the clear assurance of forgiveness and reconciliation with God, and it pours into the soul the soothing joy of absolution. It looks forward with the prophetic vision of Christ to the final accounting of the Last Judgement, but it remembers the instant need of the frightened, dying man for strength, and it hurries to him with the Eucharistic Christ Who will some day be the Judge. It fights triumphantly for the inspired character of the Bible, but it is ready to welcome the last scientific truth that has proved itself, though it is not misled by the premature brain-child of a suddenly-enthusiastic laboratory assistant.

This is my Faith, as I have come to know it and love it. Beside it, all else seems a welter of conflicting ideas and a Jason-field of dragon's teeth, warriors ready, the instant they forget their

hatred of the Church to fall upon one another in deadly combat. My feet are on the rock. I have seen too many feet slipping about in bogs and disappearing in the treacherous quick-sands.

Of course, the Church has had bad Popes. But the bad Popes never, be it noted, taught a single error, even when they were living in open lust. The Church, because it is divine, went on its way, despite bad rulers who would have wrecked a human institution.

Of course, churchmen have made mistakes. Christ chose twelve Apostles; one of them sold Him to His death, one denied His name, and all but one deserted Him in His hour of need.

Of course, there has been need of reforms, and the reforms have come, sometimes to the sweet songs of a Francis of Assisi, sometimes with stern punishment of Black Deaths. But, even when reform was most vitally needed (and saints are the first to admit and denounce the abuses), the Church kept preaching Christ's truths, dispensing Christ's Sacraments, and pointing out unmistakably the road to heaven. Bad Popes and glorious saints have been found in the same decades.

Liberty

And, as I said when I was gesturing back to the glorious history that is ours, we live in the present, the here-and-now and in that present, that here-and-now; as clearly as in the past, the Catholic Church is the one Church daring to claim to speak with the voice of Christ, reasonable in its attitude towards this life, yet supernatural in its outlook on the next. On every question, of small importance or great, it knows its own mind, and men who care to find out know its mind, too - and sometimes I doubt that any other institution in the world to-day can say the same.

The world is full of slovenly thinking. You hear so much in praise of religion without dogma. That is like praising bread without flour or the human body deprived of its skeleton, or a State without its Constitution. You hear a great deal in praise of freedom of thought; but nobody thinks a man is free to believe that the world is flat or that he has three hands or that Washington discovered America, while Columbus was the hero of the Revolutionary War. It is only in religion that a man must have the liberty to be vague and uncertain, and substitute generalities for the warm, heart-satisfying truths that Christ passed on to His Church.

I love my liberty, and I have found it in what St. Paul called the freedom of Christ. Freedom does not mean uncertainty or the ability to contradict today what I said yesterday; and I am not interested in being free to talk like an ass when the Church teaches me to think like an angel; I am not interested in the discussions of dunces when I can listen to the doctors of the Church. I have no desire for the liberty of a squirrel cage when I can walk the straight, clear-cut road marked out for me by Christ and the world's great thinkers.

The Supreme Gift

Through all the foregoing pages I have not touched on the thing that, of all the Church's gifts, is to me most precious. I have not told you how the Catholic finds within the fold not merely the sheep, but the Shepherd; not the remote, historic Christ, but the living, present Christ, in His tender humanity and His strengthening divinity, close enough to welcome into one's heart, near enough to be the sharer of every happiness and the bearer of every cross. I have not told you how truly I find that in my Church Christ is with us, with me, all days, even to the end of the world.

Crude, hurried, barely a rough sketch is this that I have given you of my Faith. But you can know this Faith only by possessing it; and its dearness grows with constant use.

It is your Faith for the asking; and with that Faith comes all that the human heart can ask for in the realities of life and the certainties of eternity.

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