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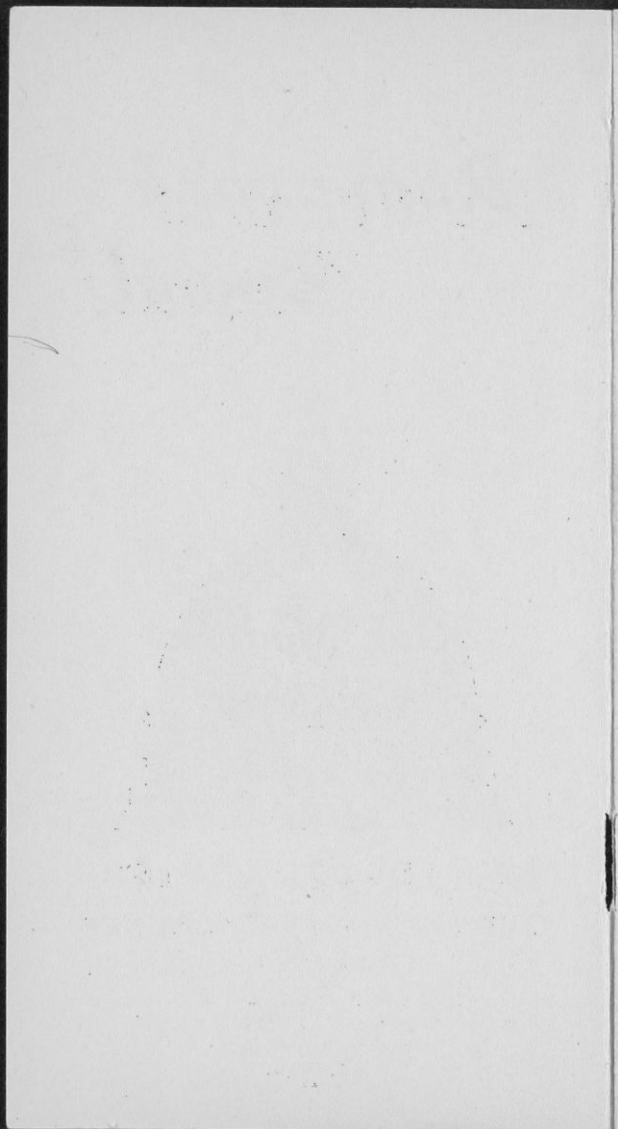
Romeward Bound!



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*Romeward
Bound*



*Our Modern
Converts*

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ROMEWARD BOUND

Everyone likes to be flattered a bit. If he subscribes to a religious opinion, he likes to think himself identified with an intellectual band of men and women. It is no particular distinction to be a Holy Roller, because it is recognized as the minimum of brains to crawl around like Digger Indians on the war path. Nor does anyone in his senses feel a longing for sun worship or fire adoration. Any creed that presents strong arguments to thinking people must have an intellectual following.

Imagine, if you can, a peaceful meeting of our leading thinkers. Nicholas Murray Butler, Newton Baker, Alfred E. Smith, Henry Ford, and a hundred of our greatest economists and financial strategists are agreeing to a gigantic investment. Without hesitation, they throw every penny they have into the scheme.

Any casual observer would say that whatever the project is, it must be sound. One or two can easily go

wrong, but for a hundred keenly intelligent men to agree on a proposition, especially, when it involves their personal fortunes and good names, is an excellent guarantee of its soundness.

In the religious world, we find existing a similar situation.

From the time Christ entwined his baby fingers in the heart-strings of the pagan world, we have seen a constant influx of great minds into the Catholic Church.

Doctrines Were Radical

Certainly the doctrines of Christ were radical, unbelievably revolutionary. His creed was conceived in revolt against the order of things, the licentiousness of Rome, the decadence of Greece, the putrefaction of Jewry. Humanly speaking, it could not succeed, so topsy turvy were the standards of morality. Almost everything happened except the end of the world. There were unparalleled heights of piety and utter depths of depravity, intellectual giants like Augustine and

Jerome, and moral pygmies like Tiberius and Nero. Above all the turmoil poised the Roman Eagle, supreme in its sway. Its war cry could be heard as far north as England, westward to Spain, eastward over every drop of the Mediterranean to Asia and Egypt, southward through the burning sands of Africa. Nations could come and go, kings perish, principalities could crumble; but as long as the sun stayed in the heavens, one thing was certain, pagan Rome with its doctrines of hate and greed was unconquerable. No sword could strike hard enough, no council could be shrewd enough, no philosophy could be potent enough to bring down the Roman Eagle from its place next to the sun. It shrieked ruthless defiance to the world.

Strange enough, it was infant fingers that would never wield a sword, baby eyes that would never shine with the cold steely glance of paganism, a baby king that would wear purple, but the purple of running blood, have a crown, but a crown of

thorns, a doctrine, but one connected with suffering and abnegation, that would change it all. In thirty years He would press paganism to its knees with His gentle commands. What no army could do, what no fleet could accomplish, what no philosopher could effect, He would do by a system of thought and action diametrically opposed to the drunken, lustful, blasphemous ritual of the day.

An Avalanche of Thinkers

We find instead of failure an avalanche of thinkers crowding into Christ's Church. Ignatius of Rome, Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria, and Augustine were men of great prestige. Their literary genius could have shone in the pagan courts as readily as under the standard of Christ. Instead, they jeopardized their fortunes and oftentimes their lives in casting their lot with Christianity.

Through the centuries, we find the same phenomena. The west quickly became Catholic. In the onward

march of the Church, it naturally swept with it the harvest of the world's thought and piety. In the middle ages, the Church struck and fed the vast springs of philosophy and theology, and fostered the keenest of intellects. Augustine, convert from the most abject paganism, literally ploughed up the fields of Catholic thought, planting with his genius the seeds of the first, real formidable system of theology. In the middle ages, the presence of Thomas Aquinas dominated the horizon. The names of Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, Albert the Great, Duns Scotus, are synonymous with anything intellectual in those days.

Church's Influence On Art

In art there can be no question about the influence of the Church. There are few masterpieces before the rise of the modernistic school that do not owe their life to the mysteries of the Church and the saints. Almost without exception the artists were men actuated by the beautiful senti-

ments of Catholicism. The divine Madonnas of Raphael, the celestial charm of Fra Angelico, the sublime conceptions of Leonardo da Vinci and Michael Angelo were unparalleled in history; and these men are only a few of the hundred of artistic giants developed beneath the mantle of the Church.

Music had its Stradella, Logroscino, Mozart, Palastrina, Franz Lizst; astronomy its Copernicus and Galileo; medicine and surgery its Theodoric, Lanfranc, Vesalius, and hundreds of others, who laid the foundations for the present high degree of medicinal efficiency. The influence in general of men like Dante, perhaps the greatest of poets, of Thomas a Kempis and Teresa of Avila, two of the deepest of mystics, of Columbus, La Salle, Joliet, most fearless in discovery; of Pasteur, often called the world's greatest savant, is incalculable; and to a man they were Catholics.

Strong Arguments for Truth

It is needless to glance through the centuries and discover the fingerprints of the Church on the pages of time. The original idea is clear enough; namely the religion that can command the thought, the science, the art and the devotion of the greatest intellects the world has known must have strong arguments for its truth. Certainly, this is not a final reason for believing in it. There have been gigantic swindles perpetrated on humanity. Whole cities have been hoodwinked into believing black is white, two and two make five, that there are square circles and the like, because there is a gullibility about human nature in the face of oratory, quick sales, and bottles bearing promises for the cure of everything from worms to worry. The world even put on a uniform and laid down twenty-five millions of its life in defence of some vague principle relating to democracy.

But nowhere in history can we find

a constant loyalty to an unsound theology or philosophy. It just doesn't work out that the finest men and women in history could believe consistently in a sensational doctrine expounded by a wild-eyed demagogue balancing himself on a soap box for the same reason that they do not believe in Santa Claus. A successful system of thought must have substance, must offer the most convincing of arguments, must prove conclusively its doctrines. Otherwise it is bound to fail.

Just there is the consolation in the Catholic Church. She has gathered in millions of loyal sons and daughters since her birth on Pentecost Sunday.

Today's Romeward March

It will be interesting to focus our attention on these late years. Forget the achievements of those inside the Church. Skip over the monuments of mind and soul erected through the length and breadth of Catholicism itself.

Rather try to visualize the steady breath-taking Romeward march of the last century. Like some lightning express train, ever gathering speed, it hurtles on toward the Eternal City, where waits eternal hope, eternal happiness. No stops, no sidetracks, no wrecks, it rushes on, true as an arrow, with its famous passengers to Rome.

No wonder the world stands by and gasps with astonishment.

The reformers started it all. They thought that by ripping Mary's statues from the niches of Cathedrals, that flinging tabernacles from above the Sacred Heart of Christ could tear devotion for these things from the hearts of the people. They forgot that men and women revered symbols of their God and their Mother much more than heirlooms and portraits of their own families. They could trample on neither without violent elemental revulsions.

The reaction came slowly. Naturally so! Swords kill, devastation of lands cripples life, diabolic persecu-

tions of sovereigns stifle self-expression. A dozen kings with hate in their hearts and a queen with a demon in her breast saw that no reaction came except abject time-serving to a greedy crown.

Cardinal Newman

Skip over the years and stand with head uncovered in the cemetery at Rednal, England. There is a small slab of marble covering the place where rests the heart of a genius and the hand of a giant—"John Henry Newman; Out of the shadows into the light of Truth" is scratched across its face.

Forty years have dimmed the sharpness of the lettering. But forty centuries can not efface the lustre that the man left on the lists of courage and honor.

On Newman's frail shoulders rested a world of responsibility. He was born at the dawn of the nineteenth century. It was during the last glorious gleams of that century's sunset that his soul finally leaped back to its

Creator. At his birth, there was blackness on the face of the religious world. The French revolt had run roughshod over the Church. Instead of Christ, they fondled chaos, instead of the Virgin Mother, they enshrined a harlot on the altar of Notre Dame. The Italian revolution had not yet shook its fist before the Vicar of Christ. But in the German states and the Balkans there were materialistic and rationalistic epidemics. In England there was no hope for anything but the smug theologies of the Reformation. The Catholic Church was hated with an undying hate. The air was charged with anti-Roman bias.

A Hater of Rome

At the age of thirty, John Henry Newman was delicate, but the intellectual giant of the English Church; a Roman-hater, but poetic enough to feel its mystic charm; a celebrated student of the Fathers, but too blind as yet to see in their writings the markings of the One True Church.

At forty years of age, Newman was

not too sure he would live much longer. His spare frame was battered through by the power drives of his mind. But he would keep writing his "Tracts for the Times" which urged a renaissance of faith and religious spirit.

It is a matter of speculation just what would have happened if his pen had been stricken lifeless before his Tract Ninety. Perhaps the leaden clouds of ignorance would still hang over England. Perhaps no light would have arisen and shone like a sunburst on the horizon of English thought.

As it was, Tract Ninety was penned; and after it came the deluge. Riveted to the centuries-old prejudices against Rome, Newman went painfully but surely to the truth. He found himself one morning forced to admit to the world his conversion.

Effects of Newman's Conversion

It was the "crash of matter and the crush of world" feared by the English churchmen. Mark Pattison, the critic, writes:

“It is impossible to describe the enormous effect produced in the academic and clerical world by one man’s changing his religion.”

Disraeli, who was supposed to have played baby games with Newman, said:

“This conversion has dealt a blow to England from which it still reels.”

Certainly this middle-aged clergyman announcing his allegiance to Catholicism was one of the most epochal events of the century. The frail little man becoming a priest, writing the while immortal literature, finding himself continually on the defence, led the modern movement back to Rome.

When he became a prince of the Church, when his hand became feeble, unable anymore to wield his pen like the broad sword of a warrior, when his heart finally trembled and broke over the smoldering battle ground of controversy, he had served his destiny. Twelve hundred English clergymen are said to have followed him to Rome, thousands are known to have

been influenced by his conversion, millions pay homage to his genius, his virtue, his consummate courage. His destiny was marked out for him; and the simple epitaph on his grave could not be truer.

“Out of the shadows, into the light of truth.”

Manning Followed Newman

Not long after Newman's conversion, the young arch-deacon of Chichester, Henry Edward Manning, became a Catholic. His was not the intense, laborious, studied conversion that Newman's was. Manning's was a quick conviction of the inadequateness of the Anglican Communion. He saw clearly the course to follow. Characteristically, he drove ruthlessly to his decision, come what might. Not nearly of the intellectual stature of Newman, certainly not of the diffident, sensitive nature of his contemporary, he was more the man of events, the administrator with not too much sympathy for the “Stradivarian” nervous system that was Newman's. Manning

became Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, primate of all England. His reign was illustrious, marked by important strides in faith and action. He lent much to the ever gathering march to Rome.

Other English Converts

Less important was the advent of Robert Hugh Benson. He was primarily a novelist. He earned a place in English literature by his romantic, historical sketches, but it was not in his position as a writer that he was valuable to the Catholic cause. His conversion was startling to the world because his father was Archbishop of Canterbury. To find this cradle of Anglicanism being rocked by the Roman enthusiasm was portentous and a fearful thing.

It is in our own day that we find a most remarkable avalanche of English converts. Such great names as Ronald Knox; Gerald Manley; Hopkins, the poet; C. C. Martindale; Dr. William Orchard; Maurice Baring; Alfred Noyes, one time poet laureate

of England; Evelyn Waugh; Enid Dennis; Sheila Kaye Smith; the popular novelist, Shane Leslie; Compton MacKenzie; D. B. Wyndham Lewis; Frances Chesterton; Owen Dudley, and Father Vernon Johnson are among them.

But greatest of all is the inimitable Gilbert Keith Chesterton. He is colossal in every department of his existence. Intellectually he crowds his contemporaries to the wall as he would a pedestrian that would happen in front of his lumbering and gigantic person.

It is hard to imagine Chesterton a free-thinker, although you can not imagine any one freer in mental gymnastics and literary somersaults. Still he was fettered by agnosticism before his naturally buoyant mind cleared itself into Christian thought. It was inevitable that he should kneel one day before a humble parish priest and receive admission into the Church.

Chesterton a Genius

That was in 1922. For years, he had gained the ear of the thinking world. Since his conversion, he has been even more spectacular in his writings. Catholicism furnished him with just the right medium for his high-flown imagination, his depth of mind, his ingenuity of expression. He has written philosophic essays that are unequaled in their paradoxical way. He wrote one of the finest ballads in the English language. His novels are bought as quickly as they are written. In one word, he is a genius, a genial, rollicking, lovable genius, one in whom perspiration figures ninety per cent less than inspiration. He can do anything but reduce his portly frame, for the simple reason that G. K. was born with a literary silver-spoon in his mouth. His brain thinks as readily as his big heart beats. He can not help being brilliant because his waking moments are intershot with ideas and his life is enveloped with the tradition and faith of the centuries.

Undoubtedly, Chesterton has given impetus to the Romeward movement. English converts have tingled with satisfaction at seeing the king-pin of letters numbered in their ranks. As the express train moves on towards Rome, no one can fail to see G. K. by the window, occupying a tremendously large compartment. His influence, his defence of the Church, his thundering attacks on infidelity and ignorance will never be forgotten.

In continental Europe, conversions are becoming numerous among the literati. Sigrid Undset and Johannes Jorgensen are notable examples. Their literary excellence is beyond question.

Romeward Movement Here

In the United States there has occurred a very vital Roman movement. It, too, has taken captive some of the best minds of the last century.

One of the first to cut himself free from the freezeup of Puritan tradi-

tion in America was Orestes Brownson. He was an eclectic in theology if there ever was one. Although born of Congregational parents, he became a Universalist minister, but soon lost faith in revelation and the divinity of Christ. Running quickly through Presbyterianism, Unitarianism, and Congregationalism, he ultimately, at the age of forty-one, thought his way into the Catholic Church. Before his conversion, he had reached the very pinnacles of literary and philosophic heights. Recognized as one of the finest essayists and political scientists in the country, his adherence to Catholicism was a shock to the rock-ribbed Protestantism of his time. He is a land-mark on the journey to Rome.

James Kent Stone, president of Kenyon and Hobart Colleges, followed Brownson into the Church with further surprise to the New England smugness. He was a man of letters, well thought of, and extraordinarily tranquil in his religious convictions.

At the turning of the century, the movement towards the Church became startling. For generations before, and proceeding in an irresistible march up to our own time, there was a tidal wave of conversions. It no longer was a shock; it came as a weekly expectation.

Other Notable Converts

Names such as John Stoddard, author of "Rebuilding a Lost Faith", the Honorable Bellamy Storer, George Searle, Dr. Kinsman, one time Episcopalian bishop of Delaware, the Honorable Peter Burnett, the eminent jurist, Professor Lord of Harvard University, Dr. Dwight, also of Harvard, Dr. Alfred Doolittle, the astronomer, Rear Admiral Benson, John Tabb and Joyce Kilmer, the poets, James S. Hill, the famous railroad builder, Dr. John Cutter, Countess Mackin, F. Marion Crawford and Frank Spearman, the novelists, the inimitable Artemus Ward, Isaac Hecker, founder of the Paulist Order in America, Carlton

J. Hayes, professor of History at Columbia and a noted writer, Henry Brownson, the Archbishops, Samuel Eccleston of Baltimore, Bayley of Newark and Baltimore, Blenk of New Orleans, Christie of Oregon, Wood of Philadelphia, the Bishops, Wadhams of Ogdenburg, Rosecrans of Columbus, Young of Erie, Gilmour of Cleveland, Curtis of Wilmington, Becker of Savannah, Tyler of Hartford, suggest a brilliant galaxy of prominent men and women to the ranks of our converts. Thousands of others have joined this movement within the last four years such as the prominent New York minister, Dr. Selden Delany, who is at present studying in Rome for the priesthood, and Horace Mann, prominent Washington, D. C. attorney and descendant of the gentleman of the same name who is honored as the father of the American Public School system. It was estimated some years ago that out of three thousand American converts, there were three hundred and seventy-two Prot-

estant clergymen, one hundred and thirty-five of whom became priests, two hundred and sixty convert sisters, one hundred and fifteen doctors, one hundred and twenty-six lawyers, forty-five United States Senators and Congressmen, twelve governors of states, one hundred and eighty army and navy officers and two hundred and six authors, musicians and men of cultural prominence.

It would become tedious to trace name after name, putting emphasis on this or that quality in the step towards Rome. The illustrious sons and daughters of America who have fought through the shadows of doubt and religious bewilderment are legion. They stand for themselves, a monument to courage and sincerity.

Stepping-Stones To Faith

Just how the grace of conversion came to them is even a more baffling question. Perhaps the occasion was a book. John Whitney, later Father

Whitney, rescued Dr. Stone's "Invitation Heeded" from the waters of Long Island Sound and read it. It became for him the stepping-stone to Faith. A crumpled newspaper wrapping containing a sermon swung belief before the eyes of Doctor Monk, of North Carolina, and subsequently to the entire population of his little village. It was the best work the New York Herald ever did.

A visit to the shrine of the Little Flower and the piety which she commanded in her life convinced Dr. Vernon Johnson that only the true Church could foster such devotion. It was the death of his little baby girl that swerved the delicate poetic heart of Joyce Kilmer to the Church.

Whether it was the influence of a nun as in the case of Judge Acker, whether the attending of Cardinal Manning's obsequies as in the life of Bishop Kinsman, whether it was the magnetic appeal of the Little Therese as in the conversion of Vernon

Johnson, it all revolves into the one fact: there is and always will be a convincing, historic turning to Christ's Church until the day when one shepherd will reign over a united flock.

When and how this prediction of Christ will be accomplished is beyond explanation. Possibly, race suicide will depopulate the face of the earth, leaving Catholicism alone to shoulder the work of propagation. Perhaps the individual movements such as the Oxford Revival will finally become gigantic in their influence and sweep millions into the Church. However effected, there is as much certainty of the fact as there is mystery about the time and the manner.

Somehow, the world feels that this final triumph of the Church is inevitable. The mind of Thomas Babington Macaulay is characteristic. Certainly, he was no lover of the Church. Nevertheless, he read history intelligently and used it as a lamp to his feet. What has hap-

pened, could happen again and most likely would in the case of the Catholic Church, he argued. The paragraph in his essay on Ranke's "History of the Popes" is one of his most graceful literary brain children; it is important particularly as a psychological study. It expresses perfectly the dazed attitude of the Protestant mind at seeing the perpetuity of the Church.

Macaulay's Excellent Tribute

"The subject of this book has always appeared to us singularly interesting. How it was that Protestantism did so much, yet did no more, how it was that the Church of Rome, having lost a large part of Europe, not only ceased to lose, but actually regained nearly half of what She had lost, is certainly a most curious and important question; and on this question Professor Ranke has thrown far more light than any other person who has written on it.

"There is not, and there never was

on this earth, a work of human policy so well deserving of examination as the Roman Catholic Church. The history of that Church joins together the two great ages of human civilization. No other institution is left standing which carries the mind back to the times when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon, when camelopards and tigers bounded in the Flavian amphitheatre. The proudest royal houses are but of yesterday, when compared with the line of the Supreme Pontiffs. That line we trace back in an unbroken series from the Pope who crowned Napoleon in the nineteenth century to the Pope Pepin in the eighth; and far beyond the time of Pepin the august dynasty extends, till it is lost in the twilight of fable. The republic of Venice was modern when compared with the Papacy; and the republic of Venice is gone, and the Papacy remains. The Papacy remains, not in decay, not a mere antique, but full of life and youthful vigor. The Catholic Church is still sending forth to

the farthest ends of the world missionaries as zealous as those who landed in Kent with Augustin, and still confronting hostile kings with the same spirit with which she confronted Attila. The number of her children is greater than in any former age. Her acquisitions in the New World have more than compensated for what she has lost in the Old. Her spiritual ascendancy extends over the vast countries which lie between the plains of the Missouri and Cape Horn, countries which a century hence, may not improbably contain a population as large as that which now inhabits Europe. The members of her communion are certainly not fewer than a hundred and fifty millions; and it will be difficult to show that all other Christian sects united amount to a hundred and twenty millions. Nor do we see any sign which indicates that the term of her long dominion is approaching. She saw the commencement of all the governments and of all the ecclesiastical

establishments that now exist in the world; and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all. She was great and respected before the Saxon had set foot on Britain, before the Frank had passed the Rhine, when Grecian eloquence still flourished at Antioch, when idols were still worshipped in the temple of Mecca. And she may still exist in undiminished vigor when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's."

Church Has Grown

The quotation is not impertinent to our subject. The Church did not spring full panoplied from the brow of Jove. It came to life and grew through the years that Macaulay describes with tremendous labor pains, not in the least allayed by the "Twilight Sleep" that accompanied the birth of most state religions. Continually, the Catholic Church

has doubled and tripled her communion to the surprise of the world, because usually she could offer nothing materially except obloquy or death. Macaulay's wonder is more frank although no different from the present bewilderment over so many conversions to the Church.

It is presumptuous to dabble with a masterpiece. But Macaulay could well have written:

"She may still exist in undiminished vigor when some traveller from afar, shall in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's and all that it represents; and turning from his task he might paint in glorious colors the monuments that will still exist, the memory of great converts."

There will be no broken arches or dusty ruins because their sacrifices are gauged by eternal measures.

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