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The Visible Church

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IN DISCUSSING "The Visible Church," limitations, imposed not only by time but by my own shortcomings in the matter of historical and theological scholarship, constrain me to select what in war-days we used to call a "limited objective." Furthermore, if there is to be any profit for any of us in the discussion it should lead us to some practical conclusion. I shall therefore attempt to set before you in rough outline one aspect only of the Church's position today in respect to the non-Catholic world—more particularly in America—and suggest a conclusion therefrom which I hope may be a basis for Catholic lay action in at least one part of the field. The discussion will concern itself solely with the Church as inerrant teacher of revealed truth. It is lay action in the strictly apostolic field that I wish to suggest to you. I shall have to touch upon some doctrinal matters. You will, of course, acquit me of any intention to preach, but it is necessary for me to recall these things in order to develop the conclusion that I shall suggest.

There is a question—I put it by way of conundrum, if I may so venture—which I have several times propounded to friends in the last ten years or so. Only once did I get the right answer, and that came from a woman! It runs thus: "What question is it, the answer to which will more fundamentally unite or more fundamentally divide two

men than will the answer to any other question that a man may ask of a friend?" That question was asked by Our Saviour himself—"What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" Either God became man upon this earth for our redemption, or He did not; there is no middle ground; "yes" or "no" must be the answer. Upon the answer will depend all human values, all interpretations of the nature and purposes of man and things, and the meaning of human life itself. It is hard to see how any completely rational man can be content to ignore that question or to suspend judgment upon it. It seems to me that it must ever confront him, inexorably demanding a categorical answer. The Incarnation is or is not a *fact*; if it is a fact, it enters into every human relation, every human activity, and it invests everything human, however mortal and evanescent, with a stupendous and eternal importance. If it is not a fact, then nothing matters very much; we live a little while—on the whole rather miserably and shrouded in an inscrutable enigma—and, as the French say, everything passes, everything wearies, everything breaks, and we ourselves fade away finally into the nothingness whence, somehow or other, we came. We know, of course, how the Catholic Church answers the question. How does non-Catholic America in these days answer it? Let us look over the field.

This, we are frequently told, is a "Christian country." In olden days, say fifty to seventy-five years ago, the people spoke of "The Church," meaning the general body of the Christian denominations. Nowadays people more commonly speak of "The Churches," meaning the same thing. (It is rather curious to note, however, that in speaking of "The Churches" or "The Christian Churches" they mean the non-Catholic Christian denominations—Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Congregationalist, and other

so-called Protestant bodies. They do not mean the Catholic Church.) The fact is that while America may still call itself a "Christian country," and while people still talk of the "Christian Churches," neither this country nor the "Christian Churches" *as a whole* any longer profess the central, fundamental, essential doctrine of *all* Christianity, namely, the Divinity of Our Lord. A hundred years ago this was not so. In virtually all the important forms of non-Catholic Christianity in those days there was agreement in holding fast to that doctrine. Fifty or sixty years ago this could perhaps still be said of most of the churches. Thirty years ago it could still perhaps be said of very many of them. Today it can certainly not be said of very many; I doubt indeed that it can be said of anything like the majority. The evaporation of dogmatic faith among the "Christian Churches" had, no doubt, begun a century ago, but the process was at first very slow. Fifty years ago it had quickened notably but it is in the last thirty years that it has proceeded at a rate of acceleration that is nothing short of appalling.

It has, moreover, affected almost all groups in the general body, and perhaps the most striking thing about it is its spread in recent years to those groups in which what people nowadays call "fundamentalism" had formerly found its chief stronghold, namely, the so-called evangelical churches. Whoever follows the "religious press" at all closely can not fail to have observed the increasing tendency in recent years to the general surrender of definite, dogmatic doctrine by a large proportion of those who are nowadays chosen to occupy the Christian pulpits. There are still, of course, exceptions, as for example the so-called "ritualist" groups at one extreme, and at the other end those groups which are still strongly "fundamentalist." Between those groups, however, it is simple truth to say that there is no longer

a definite adherence to the articles of the Apostles' creed, that the "Christianity" professed by those intermediate groups is incompatible with that creed, and that it is in fact no longer Christian. I do not believe that anyone will challenge this description of the situation. I am quite certain that while opinions may differ as to the extent to which the change has taken place, there will be no difference of opinion as to the process of change.

This being the situation, what is the explanation?

To save time I must use plain words. If they sound harsh, or perhaps uncharitable, they are assuredly not so meant. The best proof that I can give of my intention in using them is the frank confession that much of what I shall say is applicable to ourselves. It is certainly not because of our personal merits, nor of our general intellectual attainments, that we lay Catholics have not gone the way of our Protestant brethren in this matter of faith; quite the contrary, as, I hope, I shall presently show. We have no right to cast a stone at anyone. Facts, however, are facts and the fact is that the general decay of Christian faith among the non-Catholic denominations in the last two generations is mainly the result of two things. One is the fact that that faith in the first place rested upon insecure foundations and in the second place had become in some measure incrustated with ideas and doctrines which form no part of the Christian faith as taught by the Catholic Church. This is particularly true in the case of the so-called Fundamentalist bodies. The other thing is the rapid spread of something which I can call by no other name than "superstition," which superstition has infected what, for want of a better name, I shall call the "popular mind" from top to bottom and has generated what may fairly be called the "Great Delusion" of the age. Its spread, moreover, has been aided greatly by a general

state of ignorance of the deadliest kind—ignorance, that is, which is quite sure that it knows, ignorance of that kind which Ferrero had in mind when he spoke of the nineteenth century as the century “which thought it knew everything and really knew nothing.”

It is to this “Great Delusion” and the position of the Catholic Church with respect thereto that I wish to direct attention. I have not time to describe in detail all the features of that phenomenon. I must confine myself to its one main tenet or dogma, which, stated in its simplest form, asserts that “modern science” and “modern methods of research” have rendered untenable the traditional bases of all religious beliefs, so that they can no longer be held by intelligent, educated men and women. You will not commonly find it stated thus baldly but this is in fact the kernel of the confused mass of “opinions,” “views,” “beliefs,” “emotions,” “experiences,” and what not that make up the thing which people commonly—and curiously—refer to as “modern thought.” Moreover, it has infiltrated the popular mind from top to bottom. I say from top to bottom because with few exceptions—now, however, becoming more frequent—honorable as those exceptions may be, the leaders of “scientific” thought themselves have freely encouraged the notion that “modern science” either has already explained or will shortly explain away all the grounds for the traditional religious beliefs. Examples of this sort of thing are so numerous and must be so well-known to us all that it is needless to multiply them. I shall therefore offer but one, and that from a man who is commonly regarded as in the very front rank of modern “scientific” thinkers, Mr. Bertrand Russell. I take it from a book entitled “Whither Mankind,” edited by Professor Charles A. Beard. This book consists of a series of chapters written by

various people, presumably in the effort to answer the question posed in the title. Mr. Russell says—"I have heard it suggested by a biochemist that mysticism is due to excessive alkalinity in the blood. This particular doctrine may or may not be true but some equally painful explanation of the mystic emotion is pretty sure to be found before long." You will observe here, a typical example of the prevailing superstition. In the same volume Mr. James Harvey Robinson (who has told us all about the "making" of the "mind" of man) asks—"Would not it be better in the interest of clarity to regard religion not as a mystical and essential entity but as a label which we attach to one division of our beliefs, hopes and fears?" (This particular volume, I may mention, contains quite a few other similar gems of thought which will perhaps repay one for the boredom of reading it.)

Now, all the way down the intellectual scale, down even to the babblings of the versatile Dr. Brisbane himself in the Sunday newspapers, similar ideas are expressed in countless ways. The natural result is that we hear from multitudinous "Christian" pulpits, high and low, a demand that out-worn creeds shall be replaced by creeds which accord with "modern knowledge," or by no creed at all. Again we find it at the top and at the bottom. You can go, for instance, to Westminster Abbey in London and there listen to a consecrated bishop of the Church of England publicly denying the principal tenets of the Christian faith, and if you care to do so you can go to that other great fane of the Church of England in London, St. Paul's, and hear its Dean do much the same thing in much the same way. In this country (at the other end of the intellectual scale) we have, to select but one example, Mr. John Haynes Holmes in his Community Church in New York, and it is further interest-

ing, perhaps, to note that it is to this gentleman that the New York *Herald-Tribune* entrusts many of its "religious" books for critical notice! What wonder that so many of our preachers of all grades of intelligence follow the lead thus given them from above and below?

Do not misunderstand me. As Catholics we must view with great sorrow this failure of non-Catholic Christianity to hold fast to the great truth that was in it for at least 300 years, namely, belief in and devotion to the Divinity and the Person of Our Lord. We know that over 200 years ago the Holy See condemned the Jansenist heresy that "outside the Church there is no grace," and we know that where there is a true belief in Christ and devotion to His Person His Grace is not and will not be withheld. We know, too, that the apostolic work of the Catholic Church in this world is made none the easier by the disappearance of definite doctrinal belief from Protestant teaching. On the contrary, it is rendered far more difficult, and we can assuredly take no satisfaction—much less pride—from the present state of things.

Now it is clear that if "modern science" has in fact destroyed all the foundations of Christian belief so far as non-Catholic Christendom is concerned it must *a fortiori* have done the same for the Catholic faith. This brings me to the subject of this discussion—the "Visible Church"—and here we meet a notable phenomenon. Perhaps at no time in its history has that phenomenon been more striking than in the last fifty years and at no time in those fifty years more than now. In describing it I borrow from a book by Antonin Eymieu entitled "Two Arguments for Catholicism," published in English a year or more ago. The two arguments which he presents are the argument from doctrinal *coherence* and the argument from doctrinal *stability*. It is

not his arguments that for the moment concern us, for we are not engaged in an apologetic study. But a word as to the arguments may help us to visualize more clearly the picture.

Unless a religion is divinely revealed, he says it can not possibly avoid presenting innumerable doctrinal *contradictions* in its theological system, nor can it in the course of its history avoid presenting innumerable and evident doctrinal *variations*. Furthermore, a divinely revealed religion must be at one and the same time *immutable* and *progressive*; nothing can be *withdrawn*, nothing can be *modified*, nothing can be *added* (from without); it must *develop* as a living thing. As the author says, "It can not then have recourse to expedients invented for the occasion. An illusory explanation which should free it from its embarrassment today might through a sudden shifting of opinion or the discovery of new facts become the inextricable embarrassment of tomorrow. In order to know whither it is going it must, so to speak, draw its reply from its own breast, from a clear, exact, complete doctrine which can hold its ground, which answers every need, which adapts itself to all men, to all ages, to all civilizations, to all circumstances, to all times; which meets and mingles with all sciences without the fear of shock; which accommodates itself to all discoveries without letting itself be destroyed thereby; which in a word meets fearlessly all the hazards of events and all the curiosity, audacity, malevolence and progress of the human mind." Furthermore, "It is a matter of proclaiming a profound and complicated doctrine which claims to give a meaning to both life and death, to insist upon faith, to regulate conduct, to give the interpretation of the universe and to respond to the aspirations of humanity; a doctrine wholly impregnated with mysteries, offering the most violent and

unlooked for contrasts, advancing from all sides to the farthest limits of thought and traversing intact the most varied minds, always within the comprehension of the humble yet grand enough to satisfy the greatest intellects." Yet, further, he points out that it must ever oppose the inordinate passions of men and can never count on any instincts of compliance; men will always study it with the secret desire of surprising it in guilt, and the hope of destroying its pretensions. These are in brief the specifications, the requisites for a divinely revealed religion; as they stand they will serve excellently for a description of the main characteristics of the "Visible Church" as she is today, and has always been.

Now, how has the "Visible Church" met the storm which has played such havoc with non-Catholic "Christianity?" Has it changed in an iota a single article of the Catholic faith? It has not. Has it compromised in a particle of its moral doctrine? It has not. Has it in any way changed its position with respect to any of its principles of thought and conduct? It has not. Does it, in all these things, stand exactly where it did, for instance a hundred years ago? It does. This is surely a striking phenomenon. There are only two possible explanations of it—for we can not suppose that those who govern the Church are unaware of what is going on around them. The first explanation is that they are silently, sullenly, stubbornly defying the facts and the conclusions which reason must draw from those facts, relying upon a blind, thoroughly disciplined, unquestioning, unreasoning faith of the general body of the Church, hierarchy as well as laity, and hoping against hope that the winds and waves will cease before they sweep all away to total destruction. It is important to note that no one has the hardihood to say that this explanation is true—or even to

suggest such a thing. The reason is simple and it is that all the facts give it the lie. The Church has certainly not been silent in the face of the various winds of doctrine that have blown around it. Her scholars—and no one will deny that they are of the world's intellectual *elite*—have busied themselves in every field of controversy, exegetical, historical, philosophic, social, and scientific, and in each and every one of these fields discussion has been of the freest possible kind. To mention but one typical example out of thousands, and that in the scientific field, I remind you that *twenty-two years ago* a German Jesuit priest, Father Wassmann, with the full permission of his superiors, published a scientific work—*Die Moderne Biologie*—in which he definitely gave adherence to a theory of polyphyletic evolution, which particular theory, by the way, has received much support within the last year at the hands of Dr. Austin Clark of the Smithsonian! Before the “Higher Criticism” had reached its present state of collapse, the scholars of the Church had probed it to the bottom, as our college libraries will show. At no part of the line have they refused battle. We know what, in the last fifty years, has happened in the historical field as the result of the researches by Catholic historians—particularly in respect to the history of pre-Reformation Europe. In the philosophic field the renaissance of the *Philosophia perennis* is the outstanding phenomenon, and all the world knows where that arose. No—the first explanation will not do. We are driven to the second, for there is no alternative. The second explanation of the position of the Church is simply that what I have described as the “Great Delusion” is in her eyes only a superstition; that science—real science—history—true history—and, in a word, the knowledge—real knowledge—of the day present no conflict whatever with her position in dogma or morals,

and that there is, in short, nothing whatever in the *known* facts today in any domain of human mental activity in which she finds her teachings contradicted. And that exactly is the case.

Observe, if you please, what, speaking humanly is the extreme danger of her position as a result of her claim—her unique claim—to inerrancy in the teaching of faith and morals. The logic of that claim compels her to stake everything, her very existence itself, every day upon its truth. If we could suppose that—*per impossible*—a day should come in which there should be discovered and proven a single fact contradicting in a single particular a single part of her dogmatic system, upon that day she would go the way other religions have gone. It is, and always must be, all or nothing with her. The challenge that she thus offers to the mind of man is without parallel in human history and, again to speak humanly, is stupendous in its audacity. Yet it was in our day, and it was to our modern world already a-thrill with the heady wine of “scientific” discovery, that she formulated it once and for all in precise terms that none should be able to mistake. And there it stands and upon it she stands, and there upon peril of her life she must stand to the end of time—all or nothing.

If we were engaged in a discussion of apologetics you would rightly expect me to indicate at least in general outline the nature of the answers that she makes to the seeming difficulties from science, history, exegesis and metaphysics which have so largely shattered the faith of the “Christian Churches.” It is indeed with these answers that is concerned the conclusion which I shall in a few moments suggest and to which I am endeavoring to lead. But we are not now discussing apologetics from this point of view. I may note, however, two very important characteristics of the attitude

of the Church in respect of these things. One is an unruffled patience combined with sleepless vigilance. The other is a combination of vigorous rationalism, healthy skepticism and thorough radicalism, which makes her at all times relentlessly insistent upon the truth, all the truth and nothing but the truth. To the historian she says—"Let us have all the facts," and to the scientist she says—"Be good enough to distinguish between hypothesis and fact," and with this caution she gives to both her blessing. If the "scientific" world, during the last fifty years, had heeded that caution it would be less necessary nowadays to use inverted commas with the word "scientist" and if the patience (and the scholarship) of the preachers in "The Churches" had approached more closely the patience (and the scholarship) of "The Visible Church" a good many more "Christian" pulpits would today be preaching something more nearly approaching to Christian doctrine. And there would be vastly less bad logic, bad science, bad history and bad metaphysics afloat in the world today.

In parenthesis I may remark that ignorance of what the Church actually teaches upon these various matters of controversy is almost universal among her critics, even among those who make considerable pretensions to scholarship. I will not say that I have never seen the position of the Church accurately stated by an antagonist in controversy; it is possible that I have but I can not now recall a single instance. And I can recall more than one positively ridiculous blunder by gentlemen who would be covered with shame had they been convicted of a similar lack of scholarship in any other field of discussion. Many of you will remember perhaps the performances of Messrs. Goldwin Smith, Andrew D. White and John R. Draper a generation ago in this way, and the castigation they suffered

at the hands of competent Catholic critics. Yet there are people who quote them today! I doubt not that there are many gentlemen even now who pass for scholars and who believe that a Church Council once taught that women have no souls. And, to take a most recent example, I quote Professor Charles A. Beard, editor of "Whither Mankind?" in his epilogue to that volume. He says: "If St. Peter's chair is still planted on a rock the rock itself has moved; by no possible stretch of the imagination could the Syllabus of Errors be written now in the terms of 1864." If when the Professor penned those words he had read besides the eighty condemned propositions contained in the Syllabus, the documents attached to the Syllabus by reference in connection with each proposition, he is the first in my experience of many who have mentioned the Syllabus to do so. *Yet those documents are an integral part of the Syllabus itself for they furnish its interpretation!* And I have much curiosity to learn which of the eighty propositions *when so interpreted* should, in Professor Beard's opinion, today be restated, modified, or withdrawn—and why. What would the legal profession think of a lawyer whose knowledge of Supreme Court cases, for example, was confined to the syllabus attached in the law reports to each case? Just why non-Catholic scholarship is generally so bad in all that affects the Church is an interesting question that we can not now stop to investigate; it is sufficient to note the fact.

I could wrap all these statements in more polite language, of course, but we have no time to devote to mellifluous periphrasis, and must content ourselves with the stark outlines. As fifteen centuries ago it was *Athanasius contra mundum*; it has ever been, it is today, and ever will be *Ecclesia contra mundum*.

Which brings me now to the main point of this discussion.

If the world is right the Church is wrong; if the Church is right the world is wrong. We know the Church is right because by God's grace we are Catholics. But how much more than that do most of us Catholics know about the state of the battle? How much do we lay folks know of the disputes over "science," over the "Higher Criticism," over history, over metaphysics, over psychology, which have in the past two or three generations engaged the attention of our Protestant friends? How much do we know of the mind of the Church on these matters? How much do we know of the researches of her scholars in these various fields, and the answers that they give to the difficulties of today? We read the same newspapers, the same magazines, and the same books as do our non-Catholic friends and acquaintances; are we able to discern the logical fallacies, the pseudo-science and the bad history that fill them? Are we able to point them out to those who may want to know what we think of it all? If it comes to that, how many of us are even able to explain to non-Catholics the very doctrines that we as Catholics profess? Are we as a body less ignorant than the other people who have ceased to believe, ignorant, that is, with respect to the things that have destroyed their belief? How many of us can in these matters give a reason for the faith that is in us?

Again, please do not misunderstand me. A learned professor of a great lay university once in my hearing professed a special admiration of the Catholic religion "because," as he succinctly said, "it is the only religion which at one and the same time satisfies Cardinal Newman and my cook!" At all times in its history the appeal of the Church has always been strongest to the keenest minds. I think that this is especially the case today; the more robust be the intellect the greater attraction it finds in her doctrine.

It is noteworthy that in England in the last generation or two the character of conversions bears this out in a striking degree, and the same can be said, perhaps in lesser degree, of conversions in this country. But of course this does not mean that to be a Catholic, to hold the Catholic faith, one must be a scientist, a historian, and a philosopher, or any of these things. No one expects the general mass of the Catholic laity in this or any country to be even expert theologians, and I do not suggest such a thing. What I do suggest is, however, that more may rightly be expected from some of us than is in fact forthcoming.

One of the most striking phenomena of the time is the desire for a "college education." Most colleges nowadays have three applications for every freshman desk that they can furnish. I do not know—nor does it matter for the purpose in hand—what may be the present total attendance at our Catholic colleges, but I know that it is large and increasing. Every year they graduate some thousands of men and women. Each and every one so graduated has received—presumably—an education which comprises at least two things. One is a reasonably thorough grounding in Catholic faith and morals and the reasons supporting both. I am talking of something more than mere catechism knowledge. The other is a preliminary acquaintance with at least one of the subjects around which the controversies of the day mainly center, e. g., physics, biology, psychology and history. In most instances, moreover, there is also a preliminary training in philosophy, that is, in logic and metaphysics.

There is a quality in our Catholic college education which is not present in other curricula, and that is a quality of ethical unity in the point of view. It is this quality which makes a Catholic education truly "liberal" for it places

in the hands of the student the means of appraising all human values by the one enduring standard—*quid hoc ad aeternitatem?* Catholic education builds itself around the one great fact of the Incarnation and the Redemption, which a large part of the rest of the world ignores or denies. Its purpose is to color all human life with that central truth, to test all things by it, and to produce a group of intelligent men and women who shall not only in their lives embody it and show it forth but who shall also be able to defend it wherever it be attacked, to explain it to others, and to answer the questions and the difficulties that present themselves in the various fields of human thought and research.

Where is that group? Is there such a group in America today?

There is not and we all know it. And why is there not? Our colleges have been at work for a good many years. What has become of the education they have given to the thousands of their graduates during all those years? How much of it can be traced in their alumni and alumnae other than those in religious life? Make all the allowance you please for the stern exigencies of business and professional life in America and the imperious demands they make upon the time, the energy, and the thought of young men during the best years of their active life; grant that our system of industry, commerce, law and medicine demand "hundred per cent" men—that is, men who must give all their waking thought to their job or their profession under penalty of failure. Even so, it is no excuse for those who have graduated from a Catholic college absolving themselves at Commencement from all further interest in the studies for which they have received their diplomas, and from all concern in the issues of the debate that rages around them. Take, for example, the Catholic student who is to be a doctor; he has

studied his biology, he has studied his logic and his metaphysics. Has he really no time to keep himself abreast, for example, of the "evolutionary" debate? Take the student who has "majored" in history; has he, even if he be in business, in industry or in professional life, no time to follow up, to keep up, to ripen and complete his knowledge of history? Need the lawyer trained in Catholic philosophy, receiving, perhaps, his jurisprudence course in a Catholic law school—there are many good ones—concern himself not at all with the philosophic vagaries of today which play so large a part in nourishing the "Great Delusion?" Do none of them feel that they owe some duty to their great *alma mater*—the Visible Church—in this way? And to their non-Catholic friends who, when they want information as to the teachings of the Church, will ask them for it and will ask no one else?

"Commencement" is well-named for it *is* only the beginning of what should be a life-long process of continuous education, and it has not been for the vast majority of Catholic graduates any such thing. (That it has not been much, if any, better in the case of graduates of non-Catholic colleges is nothing in point.) The point to which all that I have been saying is directed, the conclusion that this discussion is intended to suggest is that Catholic secondary education is and will be a failure in this country if it does not produce an intelligent, *really* educated body of Catholic men and women who can by their knowledge and the way in which they use it influence the thought of the world around them. Why is it that the "Catholic point of view" counts for so little in discussions of the day on matters of faith and morals, at least in this country? And it *does* count for little—except occasionally. Once in a while a Catholic man or woman who happens to know what he

or she is talking about gets a hearing, and the result usually is a swift close to the discussion on that particular point. (A marvellously interesting example of this is the work of the laymen in Georgia in the last few years.)

But for the most part, people talk about these matters in complete ignorance of what the Church has to say about them. Where shall they learn what the Church thinks? They do not read our distinctively Church newspapers, they do not listen to sermons in our parish churches, they do not talk to our priests and they do not read our Catholic books. (In this respect, it is only fair to say, many of our own laity resemble them!) Where should they learn the mind of the Church on these things if experience has taught them the futility of asking information from their Catholic friends? Am I wrong in saying that this is in fact what most people have learned from experience? I think not.

The conclusion then to which I come is that at least one form of "lay action" is now badly needed among us. That is a recognition by those who graduate from our colleges that an opportunity is before them and a duty laid upon them to see that the mind of the Church—the "Catholic point of view"—is represented more adequately than it now is in the debates of the day. I do not attempt to suggest in any detail what form action should take. But obviously it will concern itself first with one main thing, and that is the continuance through life of that which in college days was no more than begun. Do I mean life-long *study*? That is just what I do mean. And I mean study of two things at least. One is the Faith itself in all its doctrinal richness; the other is at least one of the elements of the liberal culture contained in Catholic college curricula—science, philosophy, history, ethics, as the case may be. And I mean the kind of study that so many men and women give

to their "hobbies" as we call them, study continuous, interested, alert, always abreast of the time, and always on the watch for new material and new ideas. Only by some such means can Catholic college men and women take the place and do the work in the world for the taking and doing of which Catholic colleges were intended to equip them.

We have a National Federation of Catholic college men and one of Catholic college women. The former is yet young; the latter, somewhat older, has much good work of various sorts already to its credit. It seems to me that to each of these Federations I may fairly put the questions which I have asked in the course of this discussion. To whom else should we reasonably look for the answer? And for what more important task could Catholic college men and women unite in federation?

Three years ago I was privileged to address the second annual convention of the National Catholic Alumni Federation, and I then attempted to point out the extraordinarily favorable state of the line of battle then existing between the mind of the Church and the general "modern" mind, if it can so be called. I pointed out that so far as the attack from "science" and the attack from the so-called "Higher Criticism" were concerned both had completely exhausted themselves and that neither was now capable of further offensive. Also that the one notable feature in the domain of metaphysics was the vigorous revival of the neo-scholastic philosophy, and that in this respect we were in what might prove to be a springtime "such as prevailed in Europe in the eleventh century when there was in bud the second great flowering of the human mind that has occurred in the history of the world." Still more evident today are the signs of that springtime. Let me direct your attention for a moment to a new and most interesting current in modern

thought which has developed outside the Church but which is marvellously in accord with her point of view. It is in fact a revolt all along the line against the "Great Delusion." I can now indicate its nature in only the broadest of outlines but I urge you to acquaint yourselves more closely with it, for I regard it as one of the most hopeful signs of the time. It has come to be known as "The New Humanism." Professor Louis Mercier of Harvard has given in his book "*Le Mouvement Humaniste aux Etats-Unis*" a most lucid and accurate account of it which will richly repay study. The essence of the matter is not easy to state in a few words but it boils down to these—

First, a recognition *on strictly positivist grounds and as a fact* of the spiritual nature of man.

Second, a recognition on the same grounds *as facts* of the existence of the spiritual world, the moral law, and the conscience of man.

Third, a recognition of the *reasonableness* of the Christian religion as such and of the *truth* of the historic facts on which it bases its claims—including *the facts* of the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Our Lord.

The leader of this "New Humanism" is a man who stands in the very front rank of American scholarship and typifies indeed that kind of scholarship which we are accustomed to regard as more properly belonging to the Old World than to the New—Paul Elmer More. I wish that there were time for me to sketch in some detail the development of his thought and describe the work that he has done leading to the conclusions which I have just described, but time there is not. I can only reiterate the suggestion that Professor Mercier's account of it is imperatively worth reading. I have Mr. More's own assurance that that account is entirely accurate. The "New Humanism" is attracting much at-

tention abroad, especially among the younger men; it has received very little attention among our own people until very recently and it deserves a great deal more. There is indeed an analogy between the work that More has been doing and the work that Newman did in the Oxford movement ninety years ago—analogy in the mentality, the scholarship, and the method of the two men, diverse as are the fields in which they worked. Others have played a part in this movement, Irving Babbitt of Harvard, for instance, to whose book "Democracy and Leadership" I called attention when I addressed the Alumni Federation three years ago. It is of interest to note that Mercier finds its inception in the work of William Crary Brownell in the literary field and his insistence upon enduring standards in that field, for it is precisely standards, enduring standards, that "modern thought" can not tolerate! But to More belong the leadership and the main achievement—and remember, if you please, that it is on a positivist and not a dogmatic foundation that the movement has been built.

It is indeed an ideal strategic position that the Church occupies with respect to the current thought of the world. But were it as unfavorable as it is favorable my reasoning would be the same. What are we going to do about it?



