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The Modern Indictment of Catholicism—IV

Is the Church Officious?

By

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Associate Editor, "America"

The Other Pamphlets in this Series are :

- I. Is the Church Intolerant? II. Is the Church Arrogant? III. Is the Church Un-American? V. Is the Church a National Asset?*

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Is the Church Officious?

EARLIER pamphlets in the series, "The Modern Indictment of Catholicism,"¹ have chiefly centered about complaints against Catholicism emanating from outside the Fold. We have examined the indictment drawn up against Holy Mother the Church either by those who do not know her and consequently misunderstand her, or by those whom ill-will and bigotry have roused up to hate her. However, not all her enemies are aliens, and that is as might be anticipated. There was a traitor in the apostolic college. Christ Himself clearly warned His followers that a man's worst enemies are often those of his own household. In many a domestic circle there are to be found undutiful children.

In the great family of the Faith we sometimes find men and women whose indifference or lukewarmness about their religion makes them hardly sympathetic with it and who are constantly dragging the Church up before the tribunal of their puny judgments to answer for her doctrines, her practices and her policies. They call themselves Catholics; they profess to accept Catholic teachings; but they lack both the Catholic sense and the Catholic spirit. Querulous of the yoke religion puts upon them, they are chronic murmurers and fault-finders and the disloyal sentiments they imprudently broadcast to the world often re-echo in non-Catholic hearts and on non-Catholic lips, to the scandal of Christ's little ones, many of whom might today be within the Fold were it not for these unfilial criticisms.

Catholics like those I refer to have not usually a great deal of objection to the obligations the Church imposes of Sunday Mass or Friday abstinence or an annual Communion, irksome as these may sometimes prove. They do

¹The others are: I. Is the Church Intolerant? II. Is the Church Arrogant? III. Is the Church Un-American? V. Is the Church a National Asset?

resent, however, that from the cradle to the grave, their religion somehow seems to be continually obtruding itself into what they describe as their private affairs. It is meddling, they feel, and officious.

CATHOLICISM CRITICIZED

While they are willing to grant that religion fills a human need and has a distinct role in the universe and while they maintain, moreover, that their Catholic Faith is the true Faith, they suspect that it is frequently trespassing beyond its proper bounds. It apparently puts too many restrictions on their personal liberties. It wants to have something to say about the way they come into the world and the way they leave it; how they are to be married and how they are to be buried; about their social and fraternal contacts, their professional and commercial conduct, the intellectual and scientific attitude they are to assume and foster, and their most intimate domestic relations. All this the men and women of whom I speak consider unwarranted on the part of the Church and manifestations of officiousness which they usually associate only with busybodies who are constantly minding other people's affairs.

Atheism, it is true, imposes no obligations on those who accept it, and Protestantism but very few on its adherents. The code of the atheist is summed up in a denial of God while the basic principle of the sects is that they protest against the claims of Catholicism. On the other hand, the Catholic religion hampers and burdens one in many ways, and when its prescriptions or prohibitions strike home, they often call for heroic sacrifice and self-renunciation. However, if one properly realizes the relation of religion to life, of theory to practice, this should and must be so. Being something very vital, not a mere denial or protest, Catholicism must essentially affect the daily lives of those who profess it; it must have something to say about how they think and speak and act; it must modify their attitudes towards their fellows, their occupations and the world at large.

Because the modern critical American mind brooks no restraint of any sort, especially when it does not know or

understand the reasons back of prohibitions imposed upon it, and because the evil of which I am talking is gaining ground among many of our Catholic people who seem to be losing sight of the cardinal truth that their religion is a religion of authority, not of private judgment, I am going to offer now a few thoughts on some of the points that seem to make Catholicism officious. The study of the ecclesiastical prohibitions or injunctions more commonly urged to sustain the charge and more popularly objected to ought to result in our seeing their innate reasonableness, and in a readier will to conform ourselves to Holy Mother the Church in our conduct as well as in our belief.

INTELLECTUAL BONDAGE

Let us begin with an examination of the apparent officiousness of the Catholic Church in the intellectual realm. Popular education has made very many in America as proud as peacocks about their mental attainments and their fitness to pass judgment on any and every imaginable subject. The result is that there is a constantly growing number of people, some of them Catholics, who preening themselves on what they consider their thoroughly wide-awake, up-to-date thought and scholarship, and affecting to be classed with the intelligentsia, so-called, and awed by what a group of shallow thinkers and glib talkers and writers who enjoy a universal but altogether undeserved reputation for scholarship say, label the Catholic Church an intellectual reactionary.

We find very many of them among those who are educated in our State universities and secular colleges. Why, they ask, for example, will not the Catholic Church let us read what we want? Why has she a censorship of books, an Index? And why, again, is she opposed to Evolution (they mean human evolution) which is quite the accepted thing in educated and cultural circles?

EVOLUTION

We will take the evolution problem first. Where does the Catholic Church stand on the question of Evolution?

The simple answer is that with genuine scientific Evolution the Church has no quarrel but with the pseudo-scientists who mislead the unwary as to what Evolution has established or can establish about man's origin, she cannot and will not align herself.

Reason, common-sense, teaches that there is a God; that man is His creature; and that man is composed of both a material and a spiritual element, body and soul. Reason tells us nothing of how man was created, how he came to exist. It cannot. That information, however, Divine Revelation supplies. As regards the human body, Holy Scripture assures us "that God formed man of the slime of the earth." It accounts for his soul by saying that God "breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Scripture does not expressly say whether God formed man's body directly or indirectly, remotely or proximately, personally or through secondary causes. In the absence of other evidence, however, the obvious conclusion would be that the Divine action was direct, proximate and personal. The soul, of course, being spiritual, must be God's direct creation.

Now, what about science and Evolution? A good many journalists and university professors, though these last ought to show more intelligence, speak loosely as if human evolution were an established fact, something conclusively proven. Man's ape ancestry is taken for granted. Now it may be said without any fear of honest refutation that actually there is not a single iota of scientific evidence at present to demonstrate conclusively or convincingly that the human body has developed from the chimpanzee, the monkey or any other animal.

That God could have employed this process in forming man's body is possible. There is nothing intrinsically repugnant in it. Up to the present, however, science has not one jot or tittle of positive evidence to offer that would warrant an intelligent person in concluding that He did. Indeed I might go farther and add also that to demonstrate that fact some sort of a new Divine revelation would probably have to be made. We have neither witnesses of the origin of the body of the first man, nor apart from the

Scriptural narrative, any records of it. Scientific researchers may speculate about it—that is all.

That the whole man, soul as well as body, should have evolved from a brute form is intrinsically and essentially repugnant. It requires no Divine revelation to assure us that it is as impossible that matter should evolve into spirit, as it is that life should develop from non-life. That which is not living cannot produce life and neither can that which is without intellectual and volitional life develop intelligence and free will. One cannot give what he has not got. An effect must always in some way pre-exist in its cause.

As a fact, so far as I know, not a single evolutionist who admits that man has a spiritual soul subscribes to human evolution as such. It is only materialistic and atheistic philosophers and scientists who maintain that. At all events, and be that as it may, any writer or professor who declares that human evolution, even the evolution of the human body, is a demonstrated fact is either stupidly ignorant or positively dishonest. These theories sometimes make fine copy for our Sunday supplements but they are arrant nonsense.

When, then, the Church by her dogmatic pronouncements regarding the origin of the cosmos and of the human family, has her children align themselves against these teachers and writers, far from meddling with our intellectual processes, she is safeguarding them from the greatest intellectual hoax of modern times. Crass and extreme evolutionists admit neither God in their scheme of things (except perhaps a God in the making), nor a Divine creation nor the spirituality of the human soul, three fundamental truths known from natural reason and emphasized by Christian and Jewish revelation, and the Church both logically and scientifically challenges their position.

THE CHURCH AND SCIENCE

Here, in passing, a word might be said about the attitude of the Church to science in general. The constant repetition in the press and on the public platform of the assertion that religion and science are antagonistic has led

many to believe that this is so. Nothing is further from the truth. There is, indeed, a conflict between pseudo-science, false science, and revealed religion, and between genuine science and both the Fundamentalism and Modernism of the sects that pass for Christianity. This comes because dishonest or unscholarly scientists sometimes confuse hypotheses with facts or because real scientific truths are set alongside of imaginary religious doctrines for comparison. But between true science and true religion there is no more conflict, or even possibility of a conflict, than there is between the truths of any two of the sciences themselves. The reason is because in the last analysis all truth is one and nothing else but a reflection of Divine Truth, God Himself, and God is not and cannot be self-contradictory.

When religion is represented as teaching that the six days of creation referred to in Genesis were days of twenty-four hours each or that the world is not more than six thousand years old, or similar things which science has quite conclusively proven cannot be, then, of course, religion appears in conflict with science. But none of these propositions are or ever have been doctrines in the Catholic Church. Before one concludes that a religious truth is scientifically unsound, he must make sure whether it is or is not a teaching of the Church, not a caricature of that teaching.

Where true science and true religion seem to be in opposition, it is usually because the scientist has trespassed on the domain of the philosopher or theologian and attempted to interpret and dogmatize about his scientific findings. An old proverb bids the shoemaker stick to his last and so long as men of science stick to their laboratories and their fossils, to the stars and the flowers, to physical phenomena and biological processes, and let the explanation of the Bible and the supernatural and morality to those to whom it rightly belongs there will be no trouble.

When the physicist professes to tell the world that there is no God because he cannot feel and weigh and measure Him; when the chemist denies the existence of a spiritual soul because he never found one in a test-tube; when the biologist rejects the story of the creation as unfolded in Genesis because it does not square with any facts that have

fallen under his personal observation; when astronomers discard the account of the star of Bethlehem, and doctors the Virgin-Birth and others all miracles, on the score that they postulate unscientific premises,—in every case such scientists are overstepping their own boundaries and making claims wholly unwarranted by any of the findings of their respective sciences.

Is it any wonder the physicist cannot find God in the material with which he works? Is God a material being so long and so broad and ponderable like a brick? Is it any wonder the laboratory does not show the chemical research student the human soul? And is the failure to see it there just reason for denying its existence? As well deny that there is such a thing as thought or free will or beauty or truth or goodness, because they are not to be found in test-tubes. Not everything that has objective reality is reducible to a chemical element. Science affords absolutely no data on which to deny the supernatural or the miraculous. As a fact, it is to philosophy, not to science, we are to look for furnishing the criteria for testing the intrinsic possibility of miracles and the norms of certitude regarding historical occurrences.

That science and revealed religion are not in conflict is practically demonstrated from the encouragement the Church gives scientific research, from the fact that so many of the world's greatest scientists have been Catholics, and from the extensive teaching of all sciences in our Catholic colleges and universities.

THE ROMAN INDEX

But, to get back to where we digressed, our intellectual high-brows subsume that even granting the fairness of the attitude of Catholicism towards human evolution, and that between the Catholic Church and genuine science there is no such a thing as a conflict, nevertheless the narrowness of our religion in the whole intellectual field is shown by the stand the Church takes about books which the Faithful may or may not read. One would think, they charge, that Catholics are all two-year olds, who have to be spoon-fed. They may not read this and they may not read that. The

whole thing looks most absurd, childish and ridiculous. Imagine an educated person or one who makes pretense at learning, being prohibited under pain of mortal sin from reading such popular historians as Gibbon, Hallam and Ranke, such constellations in the literary world as Renan, Balzac, Voltaire, Taine, Zola, Dumas, and philosophers of the standing of Hobbes, Locke, Mill and Kant! I once heard it mooted whether a Catholic college could really teach French literature since the teacher might not read Balzac with his students, but only about him!

The Church has been Divinely commissioned to instruct men in religious truths and to safeguard their morals. In Christ's scheme the Faithful essentially stand towards the ecclesiastical government which He established as pupils towards an authoritative teacher. "He that heareth you," He said, "heareth me." And again, "Unless you become as little children, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." It is Peter who is to feed His lambs and His sheep, and His Bishops are to be the teachers who will teach men "all truth," and, "whatsoever I have commanded you." This being so, the Church has not only the right and the power but the positive duty as well to forbid her members reading what is dangerous to either their faith or their morals.

The Church is not opposed to free speech or a free press; but liberty is not license. Even without any ecclesiastical prohibition the very law of nature dictates that it is sinful to poison the mind with falsehood and to risk one's purity of heart by exposing one's virtue to temptation. It matters not that a book is the best-seller; it matters not that its author has an international reputation; it matters not that everybody is talking about a volume; it matters not that its reading might serve some material advantage: if it defends or champions heresy or schism or attempts in any way to undermine the foundations of religion, if it avowedly attacks religion or good morals, if it assails or ridicules Catholic dogmas or disparages Divine worship or seeks to undermine ecclesiastical discipline, or advocates and defends suicide, or divorce, or kindred evils, then Catholics may not read it.

They may not read atheistic books or publications, or those which propagate a false morality or ethic, much less those whose only purpose is to stimulate passion and set the mind and hearts and body on fire with sexual emotions. But all this when properly understood far from hampering intellectual liberty is a genuine protection both to one's faith and to his virtue, the two greatest treasures men have. In such instances the prohibition of the Church is no more unreasonable than that which a prudent father of a family exercises regarding what drugs or poisons shall be brought into his home.

There is a good deal of irreligious and immoral stuff being written today, and unfortunately too, being read. The Catholic's principle should be that any book or magazine that begins to trouble one's conscience by stimulating temptations against Faith or arousing passion is to be discarded. If one doubts let him ask his pastor or confessor; they are our living guides. Where no danger is anticipated in a particular case and there is good reason, such as a necessity which may arise from the type of work one is doing and which obligates him or her to read a prohibited volume, the Bishop may dispense one from the law but one cannot take it on himself to disregard the voice of God and His Church. He may think he is missing some good things in some popular books, and perhaps he is. But meanwhile he is safeguarding both his faith and his morality. Such volumes have not been put on the Index for the good things they contain but because of the poison they so cleverly mix with wholesome intellectual food. To separate one from the other often takes more than ordinary scholarship and discretion. Mother Church who is the guardian of the spiritual health of her children anticipates their dangers and by the general legislation of her Code and the special legislation of the Congregations of the Holy Office and of the Index warns the Faithful against them.

Needless to say these Congregations do not act haphazardly and their personnel guarantees that books are not condemned without grave reason. The Prefect of the Congregation of the Index is a Cardinal; his assistant and secretary are learned members of the Dominican Order. Eight

or ten Cardinals make up the Congregation and they are helped in their work by about twenty-five or thirty consultors, many of them Bishops. Hence any honest critic must conclude that their opinions have real weight and that the Church can hardly be accused of intellectually shackling her children by her prohibitions. Incidentally, only a handful of books are nominally on the Index and I doubt if a dozen volumes from all the books printed all over the world are added yearly, and most of those have to do with theology. One would sometimes think to hear people talk that Rome was daily grinding out a new long catalogue to hamper Catholics in their reading.

THE CHURCH AND MASONRY

When one passes from the Catholic's intellectual to his social life, there is one very popular charge in the indictment of officiousness against the Church and that is that the Church will not let her members affiliate with Masonry. Are not our fraternal affiliations our own concern?

Unquestionably the Masonic organization is a powerful one and offers many social and economic advantages: the Church apparently has no objection to her children joining the Elks, the Eagles, and similar societies, but she won't let them be Masons—why?

To say nothing of the fact that official Masonic pronouncements and writings, whatever be the attitude of individual Masons, is strongly anti-Catholic and anti-Papal, the fundamental reason why a Catholic cannot be a Mason is, briefly, because Masonry is as truly a religion as any form of Protestantism. It professes belief in the Great Architect of the universe, but discards all received modes of worshipping Him. It has its own religious principles and its own religious ritual. We believe that Catholicism is the only true religion; hence the religion that is Masonry must be false. Accordingly, no matter what advantages it brings, a Catholic cannot join a Lodge. In this there is nothing meddlesome or officious on the part of the Church. For I may not simultaneously be a Catholic and adhere to another religion.

True I may have a great many personal friends among the fraternity, but I may also have them among Protestants and Jews; and just as the Church does not condemn Protestants but Protestantism, so she does not condemn my Masonic friends but their Masonry. Canon Hannon of Cardiff touched this and other objections very pointedly in a recent discussion of the attitude of the Church toward Masonry appearing in the *Catholic Times* of London. He wrote:

If I brand Protestantism as sinister and diabolical, I can do so without impugning the good name and character of its individual adherents. If I maintain that Freemasonry in its conception and logical conclusion is a species of naturalistic religion based on deistic principles, this can be true and at the same time any individual Mason or class of Masons be of good and moral character. . . .

I am prepared to admit that English Freemasonry is not officially either anti-clerical or anti-Christian. It is a kind of social fellowship offering easy facilities for worldly advancement and social amenity. Its worst characteristic is its anti-social character. Preference to the dignities and honours in civic and national life, where Freemasonry is in power, is by friendship and patronage, and not by merit, ability, and long service. This is certainly anti-social and opposed to equity and justice.

But there is a further consideration. If Freemasonry in one age in a particular clime does not manifest itself in its true colors, what guarantee have we that in a different environment and congenial surroundings its inner soul will not awaken and reveal its identity with its Latin counterpart?

Nearly a hundred years ago Daniel O'Connell was impressed with another striking objection against Masonry which decided him to sever his relations with it after he had become a Master of a Masonic lodge in Dublin. He embodied it in a striking public letter in his own paper in 1837 when a hostile press widely quoted against him his early connection with Freemasonry.

It is true [he wrote], that I was a Freemason and Master of a Lodge. It was at a very early period of my life, and either before an ecclesiastical censure had been published in the Catholic Church in Ireland prohibiting the taking of the Masonic oaths, or at least before I was aware of that censure. I now wish to state that, having become acquainted with it, I submitted to its influence, and many, very many years ago unequivocally renounced Freemasonry. I offered the late Archbishop, Dr. Troy, to make that renunciation pub-

lic, but he deemed it unnecessary. I am not sorry to have this opportunity of doing so.

Freemasonry in Ireland may be said to have, apart from its oaths, no evil tendency, save as far as it may counteract, in some degree, the exertions of those most laudable and useful institutions—institutions deserving of every encouragement—the Temperance Societies.

But the great, the important, objection is this: the profane taking in vain of the awful name of the Deity, in the wanton and multiplied taking of oaths—of oaths administered on the book of God, either in mockery or derision, or with a solemnity which renders the taking of them, without any adequate motive, only the more criminal. This objection, which perhaps I do not state strongly enough, is alone abundantly sufficient to prevent any serious Christian from belonging to that body.

MEDDLING IN PRIVATE AFFAIRS

Another count in the indictment of officiousness against the Catholic Church is that she will not let a man free to carry on his business as he likes, even as the accepted ethics of his trade or profession would allow. Is he an actor? He cannot participate in very many plays and revues. Is he a book-seller? He cannot sell the pornographic literature his next-door neighbor is coining money on. Is he a merchant? He cannot carry certain lines of stock. Is he a lawyer? He is restricted in his practice. Is he a doctor? He may not participate in certain operations though both the law and his fellow-medicos approve them.

. In the last analysis the obligations of Catholicism that affect a man's commercial or professional conduct are not so much positive ecclesiastical impositions as they are the logical result of the philosophy of life which Catholic belief engenders. This necessarily differentiates the Catholic from the non-Catholic conscience and should also differentiate Catholic from non-Catholic practice, though sad to say, not all our people always measure up to their creed and some positively belie it in their daily lives.

If non-Catholics are apparently free to do many things which Catholics are not, this is not usually because such things are objectively good for some people and objectively bad for others, as if there were two distinct standards of morality, but because a pagan or un-Christian tradition has

blinded their perspective to fundamental norms of rectitude and vice which, by the providence of God, the true Church of Christ has been able to hand down to the twentieth century as pure and undiluted as they were in their sources.

The world has of late come to look upon a great many things as moral which its Christian forefathers considered most immoral. Indeed, under the influence of such fads as Behaviorism and Freudianism a good deal of the old ethic, not to say Christianity, has been scrapped for more modern and convenient ways of acting. We are told that convention is the one norm of morality; that morality changes with each new generation; that principles that applied a century ago have lost their vogue. In consequence what is called the ethics of business, of journalism, of banking, of salesmanship, of professional practice, is often highly at variance with the dictates of the natural law, the Ten Commandments, and the teachings of Christ. Expediency and what society at large, and always a pagan society, approves, have become the current standards of morality.

Now it is as plain as day that the Catholic Christian cannot conscientiously act by such an ethic. He knows that there is such a thing as objective right and wrong, good and bad. He knows that though civil law or the medical profession may approve certain practices and give them euphemistic names, that does not change their nature. Call abortion what you will, it still remains murder, though an artificial differentiation of therapeutic from criminal abortion may keep one out of prison. Legalize the sterilization of the mentally unfit as you like, and justify the quiet taking of the lives of defectively born infants or of the suffering aged, and call the processes by the nice Greek terms eugenics or euthanasia, they still remain unwarranted interferences with one's natural rights and hence gravely illicit as every Catholic knows.

And so with other things. Not everything that is "within the law" on the stock-exchange or in the industrial or commercial world can be approved and acted upon by the Catholic conscience. There may be no statutory provision compelling employers to give a living wage to those that work for them but before God and in the court of con-

science they are entitled to it. There may be no law to compel an employe to give an honest day's work to his boss, to prevent his idling his time or loafing on his job, but in the tribunal of conscience he is bound to do it. Yes, at every turn religion does cross the Catholic's path. But while it seems to impose burdens, when all is said and done, the dictates of Faith make one that much more a man, to say nothing of being so much more pleasing to God.

DIVORCE

Of all the charges made against the Church on the score of officiousness, possibly none is so widespread as the apparent meddlesomeness of Catholicism in the family circle. One may make intellectual and social sacrifices for his Faith, but a man's home is his castle, and it would seem that there at least there should be no intrusion by outside agencies. Space does not permit an examination of all phases of the problem but there are three questions especially I should like to answer briefly,—Why is the Church opposed to divorce, to birth control, and to mixed marriages?

By way of prelude it may be well to remind ourselves briefly of what Faith teaches about matrimony. Grounded in human nature and instituted for the triple purpose of propagating the race, of securing the mutual happiness of the married couple and of affording mankind a legitimate outlet for concupiscence, marriage was intended by the Creator to have a very definite role in His world scheme. In the Christian dispensation it was supernaturalized by Christ's Divine touch and elevated to a sacramental dignity. Always and essentially one and indissoluble it was never intended to be a trial or companionate affair, but a permanent union, exclusively between one man and one woman, for very specific purposes. Any disregard then of the unity or permanence of Christian marriage, or of its fundamental obligations, is a perversion of nature and sinful. I will admit that in many quarters today these principles are out of vogue and antiquated. But that does not make them any the less true and on them Catholicism takes her unwavering stand.

In the Christian philosophy of life marital infidelity is something heinous because it violates the virtues both of justice and of purity. "Thou shalt not commit adultery," is the Divine command. Divorce is sinful because the marriage tie is meant by nature to be permanent: "Wherefore," we read in Genesis, "a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they shall be two in one flesh." Christ has stated, moreover, in no unmistakable language, that "what God hath joined together no human power may put asunder." The remarriage of divorced people is prohibited because it is practically adultery and successive, if not simultaneous, polygamy. It matters not that a decadent world in open violation of the Divine command puts its approval on these evils; that does not change their immoral nature.

BIRTH CONTROL

As for artificial birth control, of which we hear a good deal nowadays, it is bad in itself, radically bad. To use the activities nature provides for specific needs in positive opposition to their manifest purpose is unnatural; and this is what artificial birth control affects to do. Married people may, if they wish, practice continency; it is a Christian virtue. But one may not use marriage and then deliberately attempt to frustrate God's purpose. Birth control is usually justified on economic, physical or patriotic grounds but it is fundamentally an ethical and religious problem and to be solved on moral and religious principles, not on its economic or medical merits. If one's pocket-book is to be the measure of what he can or cannot do, then I can justify embezzlement, dishonesty, and any number of other crimes.

Poorly instructed Catholics sometimes speak of the Church modifying her stand in the matter of birth control, as if the solution of the problem rested entirely with her. All such talk is nonsense. It betrays ignorance of fundamentals. The use of contraceptives is not evil simply because some ecclesiastical legislation forbids them. The Church is merely the infallible interpreter of the eternal law and of the dictates of natural reason in the matter.

It is as logical to imagine her abrogating the Decalogue as taking the position that onanistic practises are not sinful.

It may be conceded that the present economic situation in the country militates against large families, and makes the proper discharge of marital duties exceedingly vexatious. It is a fallacy, however, to suppose, as so many do, who borrow their opinions from irreligious writers and from contemporary atheistic, materialistic, and evolutionistic philosophers, that because the observance of the Divine law has become more difficult, therefore, it must be abrogated. As the Holy See has pointed out time and time again, our economic difficulties are largely the result of selfishness, greed, injustice, and similar vices. The cure for the evil is to correct the economic disorders. True, in view of the ungodliness everywhere manifest, the immediate prospect of this millennium is not very bright. But the Catholic Church is not on that account at fault. If trying economic situations serve to justify artificial birth control, then with equal logic would difficult medical cases justify abortion and kindred crimes, and the fear of losing their lives and their property would have been ample justification for the Roman martyrs offering incense to pagan statues.

Both in the economic and in the medical arguments used to uphold the use of contraceptives there are many fallacies. This is not the occasion to go into them in detail. Suffice it to note that the economic difficulty assumes that the basis of marriage is economic, that a full life is measured by its material advantages and comforts, that useful and worthwhile living is hardly compatible with poverty, sickness, or the necessity to struggle for material advantages. All this is false. It assumes, further, that small families are a positive good, that there is something essentially evil in people not having wealth, and that the problem of non-support, of which we hear so much in our domestic-relations courts, is chiefly a large-family problem. As a fact, birth control is more prevalent among the rich than among the poor. As for the medical arguments, whenever the question is discussed on general principles and not in a specific case, it takes for granted that a low birth rate makes constitutionally stronger mothers; also, that large families have a larger

death rate. Statistics do not warrant these assumptions. One wonders how, if a person's physical condition impede the natural exercise of conjugal rights, it can stand unnatural indulgence without a heavy physical toll. It seems safe to hazard that if but a fraction of the effort spent by propagandists and advocates in furthering this vicious practice were devoted to urging simpler living and curtailing extravagances among our middle classes, and to obtaining an honest living wage for our workers and improving the material conditions under which they live, most of the economic and many of the physical ills under which the masses are bending would be remedied.

MIXED MARRIAGES

The attitude of the Church on mixed marriages, it will be enough to summarize. The Church opposes mixed marriages, first, because she feels that two parties can never be entirely happy where their hearts are not one on that which is life's supreme concern, God; secondly, because she knows that for the Catholic party, even under the most favorable circumstances, the practice of his or her religion is bound to be hampered; and, finally, and above all, because her Divine commission extends to safeguarding the rights of any children that may be born of a Christian parent, and she foresees that side by side they will have two examples of religion before them, a situation that is apt to bring on religious indifference, whereas both father and mother should be positive helps to their little ones in the practice of their Faith. Moreover, the Catholic parent may die, then what becomes of the children's Catholicism?

Many years ago Bishop Ullathorne wrote very pointedly on this subject:

In a mixed marriage how much of the beauty of Catholic life disappears! The house is not Catholic. The family is not Catholic. The atmosphere is not Catholic. The symbols of the Faith are not visible. The souls of the husband and wife are locked up from each other; they have no communion of thought or feeling in the chief concern of life. Think what it is to be never able to speak together of what concerns God, the soul, the Church, or the

life to come. Think what it is to have no joint counsel or community of feeling in what concerns the spiritual welfare of a family. Think what it is to have one's faith shut up in the breast, there to pine and faint for want of full and open exercise in the household and in the family duties. How often are the visible tokens of religion removed to avoid offence, whilst the faith is kept hidden from the sight like some dangerous secret. Where are the family prayers? Where is the communion in the sacraments? Happy is the Catholic wife when she is not thwarted in her ways to the Church. How often must she stay at home when she would gladly seek some consolation there, until her devotion grows feeble for want of exercise! The inspired Ecclesiasticus says: "Where one buildeth up and another pulleth down, what profit have they but the labor?"

The wisdom of the Church in prohibiting mixed marriages is fully borne out by the report of the Archbishop of Liverpool made to the Holy See a couple of years ago on the condition of his Diocese. Out of nearly 14,000 mixed marriages that had occurred during the preceding five years, the record showed 2,255 cases of apostasy, and that "7,872 children had been totally lost to the Church," merely because of the difference in religion of their parents. In only 1,322 cases did the non-Catholic "turn" Catholic, a point that should give food for profitable thought to those young folk who try to salve their consciences, when seeking dispensations for mixed marriages, with the hope that the non-Catholic party will be converted.

I recall on one occasion, in the course of a mission, having a poor, broken-hearted old woman, well advanced in years and very close to the grave, coming to me for consolation because the thought of her approaching judgment was seriously disquieting her. With tears in her eyes she said: "Father, my race is nearly run and I must soon give an account of my stewardship to God, and what can I say to Him? As a young woman I married one not of the Faith. Our marriage, it is true, was ecclesiastically regular, and I had high hopes that from the religious angle nothing unfortunate would result. As a fact, now when I am dying I am leaving behind me, just precisely because of that marriage, twenty-four children and grandchildren all out of the Church. What will I say to God?"

Such instances may be multiplied indefinitely. As any

priest knows, the whole mixed-marriage proposition in the vast majority cases is a delusion and a snare.

On this point Rt. Rev. Bishop Noll writes in the *Acolyte*:

Too many young people do not sufficiently appreciate the evil of mixed marriages. They seem to assume that the basic reason for our objection is the Church's prejudice towards the Protestant, while they, on the other hand, believe they should be broad and tolerant, and not unduly emphasize religious differences. They like to make themselves believe that they will win over their Protestant partner after marriage, and they feel that he or she is doing his or her part in consenting to have a priest perform the marriage. . .

The predominant interest of Almighty God here on earth is the human soul and its eternal salvation; this cause must be aided by the mutual encouragement of husband and wife, of father and mother, and not be impeded by their lack of agreement in example and exhortation. . .

While we are often reminded that converts come into the Church through marriage, statistics gathered on several occasions prove that losses to the Faith are many times as numerous as conversions. This is only natural, even if we take no account of God's displeasure, because the children are not likely to become intensely interested in a religion which has no appeal whatsoever to one of their parents. If "without faith it is impossible to please God," if the state of grace be the one thing that counts, it is easy to picture to oneself the disfavour in which God holds a mixed union, where faith does not marry faith, nor grace marry grace, and where the non-Catholic shows an interest in everything else that interests his wife except her religion. The Catholic who contemplates a mixed marriage is much more to blame than the non-Catholic, because he actually knows that the one he is to marry is in error; that he alone has the true faith. The attitude of the non-Catholic is different. He is not sure that he is right, and holds that it is a matter of little consequence what religion a person professes, that all are equally helpful. . .

In a mixed marriage the bargain is all too one-sided: the Catholic means what she says when she promises to take him "for better, for worse, until death," but he is not prepared to bind himself to that sort of bargain, even though he pronounces the pledge. He knows what the law will permit him on the day that he and his wife become estranged, and estrangements come very, very frequently in mixed marriages. Then it is that he, his parents and relatives will blame her Church for their failure to succeed. . .

In conclusion let me say this: As Catholics we should try to strengthen our faith and to realize that what the Church proscribes or prohibits for us, has only God's glory

and our best interests in view. Sometimes her proscriptions may seem hard. So, too, do many parental regulations seem hard to little children, and in the kingdom of God we are all little children and the Church is our Mother. She is not trying to be meddlesome or an interfering busybody. Rather she aims by helping us to live more honestly, more charitably, more purely, more uprightly, to give us the peace and joy of a good conscience and to assist us to make sure our eternal salvation.

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