

AFTER ALL... IT'S

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After All . . .

It's Really Up to You



by

Richard Ginder



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RICHARD GINDER

THE UPSIDE-DOWN RELIGION

IT'S TRUE. We Catholics are trying to follow a religion which is all upside down.

Just read this. It's taken from a part of our Catholic code of living:

“Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not away. . . . Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” (Matt. v. 39-43.)

Whoever heard of such talk? That's foolishness. It isn't even good business. Turn the other cheek? Not on your life. Pop him on the jaw. Yield to every shyster in the land? No sir! Give to every Tom, Dick and Harry who takes it into his head to brace you for a touch? Hand out money without security? Take spite, and jealousy and meanness, lying down?

Sure, we know!—it's all upside down. That's what makes it hard to be a Catholic. That's why so many have dropped off along the way. That's how you happen to run across ex-Catholics.

All the early Catholics knew that. St. Paul used to call Catholicism "the foolishness of the cross" (1 Cor. i, 18), because it adored a God who, according to our religion, made a huge success of His life by doing all those things we just spoke of. They took advantage of Him, of course. They badgered Him from pillar to post and finally nailed Him to a cross, leaving Him to die after hanging there three hours. That's the One we're to imitate—Jesus Christ!

"Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. xxvi, 52). So Catholics trooped in by thousands to die for this beautiful new religion. Foolish?—Ah, but it spread

in some mysterious way, by leaps and bounds until, today, there are close to 400,000,000 Catholics spread all over the earth.

It shouldn't have worked, should it?—this religion of non-resistance. But it did! It conquered the earth.

THIS MAY BE IN BAD TASTE

IT MAY SOUND quite a bit like a blast on our own trumpet. Our reason, as always, is to give an all-around picture of the Catholic Church, and you just don't get that picture if you're not keeping in mind her overwhelming size and, at the same time, the efficiency and executive suppleness with which she works—400,000,000 people of all sorts throughout the world, agreeing, for nineteen centuries on one religion—the thing which is most likely to divide father against daughter and mother against son.

One must remember, too, the fact that the Catholic Church has absolutely no political ambitions. She looks only to the welfare of the spirit and a square deal for everyone.

The United States, according to the 1942 World Almanac, is divided into 20 Archbishopsrics and 95 Bishopsrics; each is a divi-

sion corresponding, roughly, to the way our nation is divided into states. We have, altogether, 36,580 priests serving the 22,556,242 Catholics of the country in 18,985 churches. There are 17,545 students in our 203 seminaries, preparing for the priesthood. In our 140 men's colleges, 669 girl's schools and 1,468 high-schools, we have 501,088 pupils. Besides, there are 7,701 parish grade schools; 300 orphan asylums taking care of 31,263 children; 179 homes for the aged; and 721 hospitals.

Last year, 82,087 adults heard an explanation of our beliefs and decided to join us.

According to the latest figures, we spent (in 1936) \$139,073,358, of which only 11.8% went to support the 13,315 pastors.

As you can judge, we are a tremendous force at work in the country. We are good citizens. We love our Stars and Stripes, and educate our children to patriotism. We respect authority, wherever we see it, and do our best to be good neighbors with everyone. Our boys are shoulder to shoulder with yours in the defense of our American way of life.

We appreciate the many times you have helped us in the past and will do our best to return the favor.

THE COW THAT KICKED

AS A HUSBAND, Jim was pretty much of a wash-out. Marie had known he took a drink or two when she married him, but she had never thought he would let it get the better of him. And there they were, eight years married, with three of the grandest "kids" you could imagine, and Jim coming home late from the office every night, not drunk, mind you, but with just enough liquor in him to make him ugly. How often had he picked a fight, pushed his chair away from the table, and then stalked out of the front door, slamming it after him! It used to be once or twice a week, but now it was practically every night.

Yet there was something loveable in Jim. Even when he was tipsy he'd come home, arms loaded with jelly-rolls, and little fruit tarts, and chocolate eclairs for the children. He meant well, but he was like the cow that gave the bucket of good milk and then kicked it over.

A lot of trouble was set loose in this world when Adam turned against God. We Catholics believe that mankind was almost ruined, what with intemperance and lust, and greed being unleashed in our bodies like so many wild dogs, trying to tear us apart. But we could

never believe that we were altogether wrecked by that perverseness of our first Father. No, there was something good left in us—something loveable—so attractive that it drew down the Son of God to live with us and suffer a torturous death by crucifixion.

The Catholic Church takes that little bit of good and works with it, developing and strengthening it, building on it, slowly, carefully, a structure of heavenly strength and beauty. She takes philanthropy and turns it into charity; she takes humdrum affections and expands them and exercises them, until they take in the whole world with a great and other-worldly love. She takes an everyday taste for moderation, an admiration for cleanness, and turns them into the gorgeous diamond of godlike purity and chastity. In other words, she uses the natural as a foundation for the supernatural; so that the sinner always has hope. The poor fellow can believe that if he prays hard enough and works hard enough, he will be able once again to turn that little bit of good in him against the selfishness which is now eating him up.

TO DIE LIKE A GENTLEMAN

MOST OF US hope to go that way—with dignity; no cringing, no self-pity, no fear at the approach of death, but, as the poet says, “Sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust, like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.”—That’s the death of a gentleman!

It isn’t the believer who is in danger of a craven death, but it’s the poor fellow who has lost faith in a life to come. He’s the one who has everything to lose in dying. He’s the one who is scared out of his wits, actually, because, in spite of himself, as old Plato said hundreds of years before Jesus, he begins to doubt his own denials and wonder whether he might not have been barking up the wrong tree after all. It’s only natural. When practically the whole world is telling you you’re wrong, you don’t have much to bolster up your own opinion, and everything comes to a head at the moment of death.

Apart from his doubt, he must believe that he’s leaving his wife and family, never to see them again; his home, his business, everything he cherished in this life, is slipping from him. He is passing, he believe, into a dreamless sleep which knows no waking.

For the believer, death is no grim reaper. Death is but the invitation to a larger life; a slipping through the curtain separating light from this darkness; the passing from restlessness to a conscious peace and joy. The Christian leaves his wife and family, yes, but only for a time. There will be a joyful reunion one day on another shore. He exchanges the shabby trappings of this life, bank account and insurance, real estate and business, for a sight which will satisfy his heart for aye.

Wherever we meet death, at home, on the street, or in battle, we know no fear. Death is our friend. He does not take life. He gives it.

This is a belief which warms the heart and stirs to greatness. Believing this, we can conquer whole worlds; we can conquer even ourselves. Pray for those poor non-believers, then; have pity on them; they're missing so much. And thank God always for the faith He has given you.

"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."—(John xi 25-26)

GETTING OVER THE HUMP

IN GENERAL, we think we're pretty wise, until some disaster threatens—until the baby gets sick, for instance. Then we can't get a doctor soon enough. Treat the infant ourselves? Not on your life! We don't know anything about medicine, and when that one tiny life is at stake, we don't intend to fool around with any home-made remedies. We want a doctor—a specialist, if possible, but someone, in any event, who will know what to do.

Or maybe some department store is going to sue us for a bill we're sure we paid. That certainly knocks the wind out of our sails. All of a sudden we feel helpless. Here is this big legal firm training both barrels on us and threatening to shoot unless we come across. The only thing to do is to get a lawyer, someone who can hear out our story and see how it squares up with the law. Then he'll tell us what our chances are and, perhaps, plead our case for us, if that be necessary.

Why, we're "stuck" if we only break the spring in our watch. We have to take it to an expert.

That's why we Catholics don't mind listening to authorities on religious matters. Our priests spend twenty years of their life in

school, studying philosophy and theology, so that they can help us with our problems, just as the doctor has, and the lawyer. They have training in logic and clear thinking. They study the Bible in its original languages. They go over the successes and failures of past generations. They are the heirs to centuries of careful thought.

The priest is doctor to our souls, just as the physician is doctor to our bodies; and we would as soon go against the advice of the one as of the other.

Religion is too complicated a thing and too important, to be tampered with by amateurs like us.

So, we Catholics get over our first hump by getting down on our knees and confessing, before God, that we don't know everything,—about law, about medicine, about philosophy, about music, about religion. After that, everything is easy. We just take our problem to a man trained in the proper field—lawyer, doctor, philosopher, musician or priest.

But the hardest part is getting over that hump—admitting to ourselves that we can still be taught a few things, in this case about religion.

"I USED TO BE A CATHOLIC"

YES, IT'S POSSIBLE that you might meet one of these at some time or another. You will generally find that he is a loud sort of person, the kind you wouldn't ask to your home for dinner. He is forever holding the floor at the top of his lungs, smacking his lips and relating with gusto a bit of hearsay about some priest or prominent Catholic.

We invite you, good neighbors, and beg you, to question these people wherever you meet them. Get the facts. Ask for names, places and dates.

You won't be surprised, either, when you are most often disappointed. The story generally turns out to be an old wives' tale, warmed over, embroidered, and garnished with every distortion a twisted mind can invent.—But facts?

"No, I don't know his name. Happened quite a while ago. Heard about it from a guy next to me where I used to work. That's why I quit the Church."

Then, if you really want to touch a sore spot, and if you dare, ask him whether he's ever been divorced. Most (but not all) difficulties with our Church arise from our lofty concept of marriage as a world-without-end bargain. We don't know what Protestants believe on the

point, but once a Catholic has given himself in marriage before a priest, he can't remarry while his wife is living.

But if a man bumps his head against that law, he may well be ashamed to admit his weakness. His next step, then, is to pass the buck—to blame his leaving the Church on someone else.

Or you may hear an ex-Catholic say that religion is a "racket." In such cases, just remember to ask this one question: "How much did you used to give each week?"

It works like a charm.

We're supposing, of course, that you want to see everyone get a square-deal: Protestant, Jew or Catholic. So, the next time you hear an "ex-Catholic" giving his Church a going-over, make him give you concrete facts. Don't let him lead you by the nose. Make him state names, persons and places. Once you have those, you can easily check up with an unprejudiced person who has access to the truth.

NO FATHER, NO MOTHER . . . HOW LUCKY!

CAN YOU remember how, when we were little, we used to be irked now and then by the constant bossing of our mother and dad?

“Did you comb your hair?—Did you wash the back of your neck?—You go right up and get a fresh shirt, and shine your shoes while you’re at it.”

We had to be on time for meals, we had to be in long before midnight, we had to go to the store and cut the grass. Our books and magazines were inspected, informally, but none the less efficiently. Our friends were given the once over.

In fact, we were sometimes tempted to envy the little orphans who, we were told, had no mothers nor fathers.

But when we were in trouble—oh boy! That’s when home looked good; when things weren’t going right at school; when we had the stomach-ache or when some trusted friend let us down pretty badly—then we thanked God for Mom and Dad, those towers of strength standing on our either side.

We often think of those things as we watch a few of our smart-aleck friends floundering around without religion. They wanted “freedom” and now they have it, poor souls! They can wallow in dirt to their hearts’ content. They have no one to remind them that they’re beginning to smell morally, that they need a spiritual bath. They are free to read all the garbage in print, to run around with every

loose character in town, free to face troubles all alone, to take the full force of failures, disappointments, and disillusionments without any help at all.

How pathetic they are when death touches their own family circle; how bravely they try to be "brittle," "sophisticated."

Like forward children, they have abandoned God, their Father, and deserted their great Mother, the Church.

What a price to pay for such a tawdry, such an illusory freedom!

If you have no spiritual home, then find one. It isn't bravery, it's plain folly to try meeting the battle of life alone.

Naturally we are convinced that our Church is the only place for you. We wouldn't be Catholics if we didn't. . . . But, regardless of that, find some Church which can prove its claim to your loyalty. Begin now. . . . After all, it's only something like having sense enough to come in out of the rain!

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