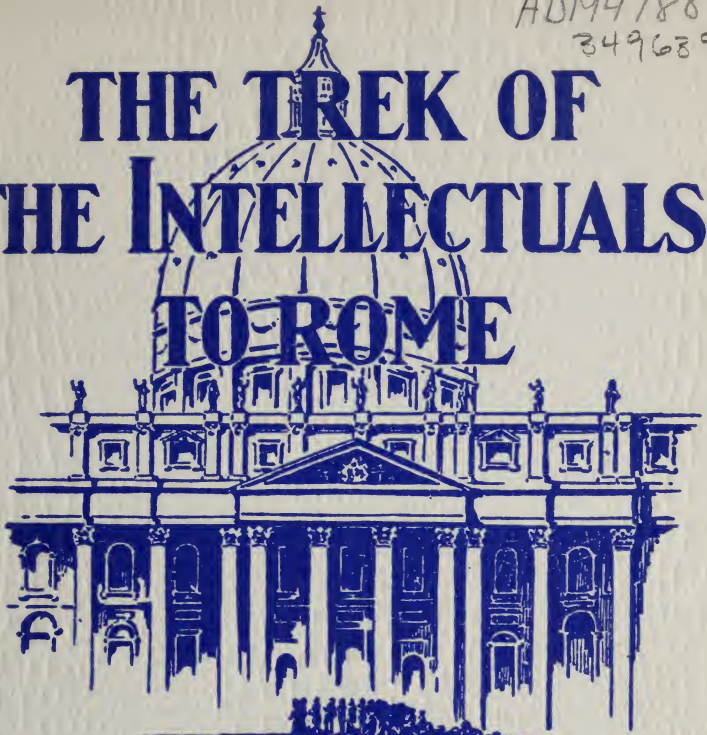


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THE TREK OF THE INTELLECTUALS TO ROME



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The Trek of the Intellectuals to Rome

The Dramatic Surrender to Truth

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*“Wir wandern von der Heimat weit hinaus;
Finden doch in der Fern das Elternhaus.”*

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WHEN John Henry Newman ended his long quest for religious truth and certainty by knocking at the portals of Rome on October 9, 1845, William E. Gladstone declared prophetically: "The Church of England has received a blow from which she shall reel and stagger for half a century." Was the period of convalescence which the Prime Minister predicted to prove too short? Recent events in England look that way.

G. K. Chesterton caused the British nation to gasp in astonishment when he entered the citadel of the ancient Faith. C. C. Martindale had revived the traditions of intellectual brilliance established by Newman when a student at Oxford, by taking the first prize in practically every course he followed at Oxford—a record which, I believe, has never been equalled. When he, too, turned to Rome to find historic Christianity the intellectuals of England were dismayed. When Ronald Knox, the son of an Anglican Bishop and one of the ablest satirists in England, renounced the parental heritage to find in the alien communion of Rome peace and serenity, the dismay of the intellectuals turned to alarm. Are all the intellectuals drifting Romeward? was a question heard on many sides.

One of the most eloquent voices in the pulpits of England and one of the most beloved ministers as well, is Dr. William E. Orchard, until recently pastor of King's Weigh Chapel. For years Dr. Orchard had been groping in the mists for more light and for greater assurance of being in union with the historic Church of Christ. In his recent *From Faith to Faith* he tells of the spiritual pilgrimage

which ended at Rome. Rev. Dr. Vernon Johnson, an Angelician scholar of note, has recently trod a similar path, ending again at the portals of Peter the Fisherman.

Lunn Surrenders Sword

The trend Romeward, however, has been brought in a vivid and dramatic manner before the attention not only of England, but of the English speaking world, by the action of Arnold Lunn. One of the ablest and most brilliant of the antagonists of the ancient faith, Lunn has surrendered his sword and joined the procession that began with Newman and continues to this day its ceaseless trek toward Rome.

What is the magnetism of Rome? What is the strange attraction which draws with such apparent irresistibility many of the best minds of England to take a step which goes counter to the training of a lifetime and brings amazement and distress to their family and friends? Perhaps the case of Arnold Lunn will throw some light on this mystery. Perhaps it will reveal the line of reasoning, the historic considerations, the objective credentials which gave no quarter, save absolute surrender.

Lunn's dozen volumes had already won for him an enviable reputation as a writer of distinction. In one of his volumes, however, he played the rôle of a critic of the Church. Few who read this work, *Roman Converts*, ever imagined that within a decade, the author would himself be traveling over the same highway as the men whose conversions seemed to him so difficult to explain on rational grounds. In a recent volume, *Now I See*, Lunn narrates the moving story of his spiritual Odyssey from agnosticism to Catholicism.

Dean Inge's Prophecy

Lunn was born in 1888 at Madras, India, where his father was serving as a Methodist missionary. His mother was the daughter of Canon Moore, an Episcopalian divine and headmaster of Middleton College. As a child, he was taken to the Anglican service in the morning and to

the Methodist service in the evening. Despite the double ration of churchgoing, he did not form any strong attachment to either church. Realizing dimly that the double ration was due to the schism within his family, he came to regard unity as the most important mark of the true Church.

He studied at Harrow and at Baliol College, Oxford, where he gave evidence of intellectual brilliance in the fields that interested him, but paid scant attention to the routine curriculum. He devoured the works of the leading Modernists, English, French and German. The pragmatism of William James appealed to him strongly. Enamored of modernism, he regarded orthodox Christianity as untenable and looked upon Catholics as "people who exalted faith and emotion at the expense of reason and history."

It was substantially this view that prompted him to investigate how apparently intelligent Englishmen like Newman, Manning, Knox, etc., could in spite of their Anglican training and associations enter the Church of Rome. His study of the facts of history, the writings of the early Fathers bearing witness to the Apostolic teachings, the Thomistic exposition of the philosophical basis of Catholicism—credentials which gripped the minds of his Roman Converts and gave them no rest until they surrendered—made perceptible gaps in his cocksure attitude that historic Christianity was outmoded. Later on he wrote *The Flight from Reason*, in which he contrasts the Thomistic insistence upon reason and objective evidence with the subjectivism and credulity prevalent today. When his father sent Dean Inge a copy, the latter prophesied, "Mark my words, your son will end a fanatic papist."

"The Cold Clear Light"

In 1930 Lunn began to exchange letters with Father Ronald Knox of Oxford on Catholicism. In this volume of controversy, entitled *Difficulties*, Lunn marshals the strongest objections to Catholicism he could think of, only to have them demolished by Father Knox. As the cor-

respondence progressed, he began to feel unsettled. "I've written a very good letter to Father Knox," he remarked to his wife. "You'd better write a good letter to yourself," she replied acidly, "if you want to remain a Protestant."

Like Inge, she was a good prophet. With all his objections answered, Lunn found himself driven by the sheer force of reason to take the step, for which he had formerly derided his Roman Converts. He had been to Mass but a few times in his life. There was no particular appeal in the Church's liturgy. No emotional appeal. When he was received by Father Knox, he surrendered to the credentials which had made willing hostages of Newman, Manning and the very priest, the son of an Anglican bishop, who was then opening for him the portals of Rome. "The cold clear light of reason," he writes, "is all the guidance a man needs to find his way to the Church. The invigorating warmth of Faith is a luxury which he has no right to demand."

"I had no more idea of becoming a Catholic," said G. K. Chesterton, "than of becoming a cannibal." So it was with Arnold Lunn. A capacity for logical reasoning and a weakness for objective evidence instead of intuition drove Lunn, like Chesterton before him, over a path that crossed the boulders of prejudice and misconceptions and stopped not even at the threshold of the Catholic Church but continued straight to the altar. If ever a man has been catapulted into the Church by the sheer power of reason, that man is Arnold Lunn.

"Funny Internal Feeling"

The appeal of the Catholic apologist to objective evidence, in contrast to the tendency of the modernist to shy away from external facts and appeal to personal intuition, made a profound impression upon Lunn, who was searching for religious truth with his intellect and not with his feelings. In this he was as old-fashioned as St. Thomas Aquinas, who had the curious habit of demonstrating his theses by an appeal to external evidence amenable to rea-

son, instead of striking the modern pose and pointing to the subjective evidence—the internal experience which the subject alleges he has, but which no other person in the world can verify. He perceived that the Catholic Church alone retains the medieval heritage of appealing to reason instead of emotion and alleged intuition to establish the validity of her belief. She battles single-handedly a vast array of heresies which agree only in fleeing from reason and in seeking refuge in the dark cave of subjectivism, in which they find security because no one can discover either where or what they are.

The new moral codes which are offered as so many panaceas to a confused and distraught age are all based upon the authority of intuition. "All these modern prophets," observes Lunn, "appeal to a funny feeling inside, a feeling that they are right and that other people are mostly wrong. Professor Julian Huxley, for instance, has a funny feeling inside when he listens to noble music or strays by chance into a Catholic cathedral. This funny internal feeling, hereinafter known as Fif, responds, so he *feels*, to some objective reality. He has therefore written a book to prove, or rather to assert, for no genuine Fifite ever condescends to proof, that you can banish God and revelation from religion and yet retain everything that is worth retaining, provided, of course, that you have got the right kind of Fif."

Lunn's analysis of H. G. Wells, the most vocal of the literary salesmen of new religions and new codes of ethics, is capital. He characterizes Wells as a classic example of the Fif malady. Losing all contact with objective truth, this philosopher novelist—or should we say novelist philosopher?—weaves a gossamer world of unreality out of his innards after the fashion of a spider spinning his web in the springtime. His book, *God the Invisible King*, is of interest chiefly to the student of the malady prevalent among the modern prophets, known as Fifism. Lunn finds the volume enormously interesting because it offers such a splendid exhibition of the current Fifite pathology in all its naked naïveté.

"I'm Drawing God"

Writing this curious book under the impression that the world was waiting for him to supply it with an up-to-date deity, Mr. Wells scorns the appeal to reason, frowns upon facts, and opens the faucet for his funny internal feelings to gush forth. Lunn illustrates the temper of mind which characterizes Mr. Wells' creation of a deity suitable for the new age, with the following story. A mother once discovered her little daughter drawing pictures, strange pictures. "What are you drawing?" asked the mother. "I'm drawing God," answered the little girl. "You can't do that," counselled the mother, "nobody knows what God looks like." "They'll know now," replied the little girl, and went on drawing.

"They'll know now," says Lunn, is the motto of Mr. Wells. That the latter confirms the analysis of Lunn is evident from such passages as this: "Modern religion," writes Wells, "bases its knowledge of God and its account of God *entirely* upon experience. It has encountered God. It does not argue about God; it relates."

Where St. Thomas demonstrated, Mr. Wells relates. Tapping the fountain of his Fif, he pours out streams of dogmatic assertions about his up-to-date deity. From the first page to the last there is nothing remotely resembling an argument, nothing that has a nodding acquaintance with sustained logical reasoning. Are you curious to know what kind of a deity emerged from this novel method of gestation? Here it is: "But the God of this new age, we repeat, looks not to our past but our future, and if a figure may represent him it must be the figure of a beautiful youth, already brave and wise, but hardly come to his strength."

If one is impertinent enough to ask Mr. Wells how he can possibly know that God is as youthful and as immature as the above portrait discloses, the author replies with unruffled dignity: "Thus saith Fif." "It is not surprising," comments Lunn, "that the God whom Fif invites us to worship is very like Mr. Wells." Man has a habit of

making a deity in his own image and likeness. Lunn's keenness in detecting the cancer of subjectivism vitiating the whole body of Wellsian and Huxleyan literature prevented him from dallying in that camp.

Church Like Christ—Infallible

His search for the truth began and ended with Christ. Once he had found the right answer to the question, "Whom say ye that I am," the rest was easy. "Once I had convinced myself that Jesus is different from all other men because He is God, I had not far to look for the Church which differs from all other Churches because it is divine. The Church of Christ must be unique like the Incarnation."

A few weeks after his reception into the Church, Lunn was invited to explain his conversion before a learned society which specializes in such religious discussions. His reasoning was in the form of the following syllogism. Christ was infallible. The true Church will teach the infallibility of Christ. No Church but the Catholic Church actually teaches the infallibility of Christ, and is ready to take disciplinary action against a member who denies any of the doctrines of Christ.

In the ensuing discussion, an extreme Modernist, a dignitary of the Church of England, objected to Lunn's logic. Christ, he contended was infallible as God, but fallible as man. He was true God and true man, and a true man must be a representative specimen of the genus man. Now it is in the nature of man to err, and Christ as man was therefore liable to err. Lunn invited his Modernist friend to suggest a criterion for discriminating between the truths which Christ revealed as God, and the errors which He propagated as man. From his reply Lunn gathered that Christ spoke as God when He agreed with Bishop Barnes, and as a man when He agreed with the Pope.

Lunn asked his Modernist critic how he managed to work up an enthusiasm for a remote Galilean, the record of Whose life and teachings was vitiated by so many miracles

which he rejected. To which he replied: "Because Christianity gives me a uniquely satisfying experience." Much of the same defense, Lunn pointed out, is often advanced for adultery by earnest disciples of the prophets of the New Morality. "How can you," continued Lunn, "begin to convert them from the error of their ways, except by appealing to an external, objective moral code, whose existence must be proved, not by an appeal to a uniquely satisfying experience, but by the appeal to reason?" How difficult it is to reason with those whose only appeal is to *Fif*, their funny internal feeling—the cancer of subjectivism that vitiates all reasoning and precludes all argument.

What Is Rome's Attraction?

Lunn reports an amusing but enlightening incident of a Modernist friend who believed (so he said) in the deity of Christ while rejecting some of His teachings. "I'm going to preach on the attraction of Rome," he telephoned to Lunn.

"What precisely do you hold to be this Roman attraction?" inquired Lunn.

"Oh, authority and uniformity and great traditions."

"Yes, yes," said Lunn, "but surely you're going to say something about the main attraction of Rome, the fact that the Catholic Church alone has remained true to the mind of Christ."

"Oh, I know your line on that question," his friend replied impatiently, "but really you can't expect me to go into all that."

Whereupon Lunn concludes: "I fear not. Or, rather, I did not expect my friend or any other Protestant to 'go into all that' and remain a Protestant."

Lunn closes the story of his spiritual *Æneid* with the words of Hilaire Belloc who first set his feet on the path to Rome: "There is a city full, as are all cities, of halt and maim, blind and evil and the rest; but it is the city of God. There are not two such Cities on earth. There is One. One thing in this world is different from all others.

It has personality and a force. It is recognized, and (when recognized) most violently loved or hated. It is the Catholic Church. Within that household the human spirit has roof and hearth. Outside it is Night."

The Case of Chesterton

The conversion of Arnold Lunn recalls that of his more famous compatriot, Gilbert Keith Chesterton, with which it has many elements in common. Both were led to take the step by logical reasoning and objective evidence. Emotion played little, if any, rôle in either case. Both are gifted *littérateurs* with a wide acquaintance with history and European culture. Both had been at one time critics of the Church, and both passed through the stages of agnosticism, through the halfway station of Anglicanism in their quest for religious truth which terminated at Rome.

Let us examine the credentials and the lines of reasoning which prompted Chesterton to take the decisive step, and thus secure additional insight into that mysterious attraction of the Catholic Church which continues to draw the best minds not only of England, but of all the race, to seek shelter and repose under the expanse of her mighty dome. For today more than ever the dome of Michelangelo over the tomb of Peter the Fisherman stands in a world of confusion, division and bewilderment as the symbol of that solitary unity which transcends the differences of nations and of cultures and binds its vast army of three hundred and fifty million members in all the countries of the world with the strong and imperishable bond of a common faith.

England was shaken as with a mighty bomb in 1922 when G. K. Chesterton, the brilliant writer of paradox, announced his submission to Rome. A prominent Angelican clergyman, Canon Headderly, voiced at that time the criticism of many against "the general muddleheadedness" of the Church which caused the departure of so gifted a writer. "We have never had such an apologist as G. K. Chesterton," he declared, "and yet he has hardly ever figured at a Church meeting. We prefer the dull logic of some dry-as-

dust professor from Oxford to the sparkling paradox of the greatest wit of that century. Religion is still groaning under the weight of Puritanism and kill-joys in this country. Mr. Chesterton would lift us up, but we won't let him. We are still scared by mid-Victorian arguments about science and miracles. G. K. C. would deliver us, and keep us orthodox at the same time.

"The Largest Sincerity"

"But we would rather not be set free. Any one who courteously and fairly explodes Puritan fallacies is doing more good than he knows to the causes of true religion in England. Puritanism has virtually destroyed Sunday in thinking to preserve it. It has made religion suspected. It has taken away joy and beauty and love while it was doing (or pretending to do) the work of angels who made merry in heaven. Most of this sad work has been through sheer lack of humor, and this is partly why it can only be undone by humorists like Chesterton."

The London *Tablet*, expressing the joy of Catholics throughout the English-speaking world, said at that time: "For Catholics, indeed, his coming into the Fold, if it should abate some of the pleasure and the pride they had in the friendly and forceful testimony of an acute outsider, removes at once and forever any misgiving as to the reality and the actuality of all his poetry and all his prose. The word has become the deed. All men may know for certain now that it meant more than an esthetic love for the Middle Ages; it was charged with duty as well as with beauty; it achieved, more than a merely literary sincerity, the largest sincerity in life."

Chesterton did not leave the Anglican Church as a result of pique or any emotional disturbance. He entered the Catholic Church because it is the Church established by Christ and presents the unmistakable credentials of its divine origin and of its authority to teach the gospel of its Founder to all mankind. The Mother Church of historic Christianity possesses those paradoxical qualities which

Chesterton was quick to perceive and quick to admire.

She is the greatest conservative force in the world, yet the most adventurous. She possesses the mellow wisdom of two thousand years, and the eager enthusiasm of youth. She discarded the heresies of fifteen centuries ago which have become the novelties of today. She does not embrace every new scientific theory that is marshaled into the public square with the blare of trumpets and the beating of drums, because she does not wish to be a widow the day after tomorrow.

A Secondary Loyalty

She smiles at the deadly seriousness of the nationalists sitting in the saddle of all the countries today and seeking to remake the world. She smiles because she has seen this idol, along with many others, rise and fall. When Edith Cavell, one of the noblest martyrs of our modern religion of nationalism, was about to face the firing squad of earnest German soldiers, intent upon the service of the fatherland, she cried out: "I see now that patriotism is not enough." The cry stirred the Protestants of England as though it were a great and a startling discovery. To the Church, however, it was as ancient as the second of the two great commandments: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The loyalties of patriotism are secondary in time and logic to the law of universal morality, to the two great commandments of love which contain the whole law and the prophets. To the nationalist who champions the totalitarian authority of the state, the authority to speak in matters of religion as in affairs of politics, she answers with the pulverizing plainness of the Book of Job: "Where were you when the foundations of the world were laid?" Contrasting her antiquity with the recency of any of the nations of Europe, the Church might well inquire of them: "Where were you when the foundations of the Church were laid?"

"It is absurd to forget," observes Chesterton, "that the Church itself received the first loyalties of men who had

not yet even conceived the notion of founding such a national and separate state; that the Faith really was not only the Faith of our fathers, but the Faith of our fathers before they had even named our fatherland."

"Catholicism Is True"

To a mind so multi-faceted as Chesterton's, which perceived the myriad charms of the Church, and understood the mellow wisdom which enabled her to view with serenity the colossal trifles and the outworn novelties which were shaking the creeds of the sects asunder, it is no easy matter to point to the one set of credentials which appealed to him most. The one fact above all others which overwhelmed him with its cogency and which is the common denominator of all her credentials, is the simple fact that *Catholicism is true*.

"The difficulty of explaining 'why I am a Catholic,' " says Chesterton, "is that there are ten thousand reasons all amounting to one reason: that Catholicism is true. I could fill all my space with separate sentences each beginning with the words, 'It is the only thing that . . .' As, for instance, (1) It is the only thing that really prevents a sin from being a secret. (2) It is the only thing in which the superior cannot be superior; in the sense of supercilious. (3) It is the only thing that frees a man from the degrading slavery of being a child of his age. (4) It is the only thing that talks as if it were the truth; as if it were a real messenger refusing to tamper with a real message. (5) It is the only type of Christianity that really contains every type of man; even the respectable man. (6) It is the only large attempt to change the world from the inside; working through wills and not laws; and so on."

Bible on Witness Stand

The weakness of the Protestant position in placing the Bible on the witness stand to decide every controversy that arose became evident to Chesterton at an early age. For

he perceived that the Bible can speak only through living voices, only through its interpreters. When these interpreters, speaking ostensibly as the voice of the Bible, contradict each other, confusion results. When the attempt to solve the difficulty is made by enhancing the authority of the Bible as the sole word of God, needing no interpreter, confusion becomes worse confounded.

"I grew up in a world," writes Chesterton, "in which Protestants, who had just proved that Rome did not believe the Bible, were excitedly discovering that they did not believe the Bible themselves. Some of them even tried to combine the two condemnations and say that they were steps of progress. The next step in progress consisted in a man kicking his father for having locked up a book of such beauty and value, a book which the son then proceeded to tear into a thousand pieces. I early discovered that progress is worse than Protestantism as far as stupidity is concerned. But most of the freethinkers who were friends of mine happened to think sufficiently freely to see that the Higher Criticism was much more of an attack on Protestant Bible-worship than on Roman authority. Anyhow, my family and friends were more concerned with the opening of the book of Darwin than the book of Daniel; and most of them regarded the Hebrew Scriptures as if they were Hittite sculptures. But, even then, it would seem odd to worship the sculptures as gods and then smash them as idols and still go on blaming somebody else for not having worshipped them enough."

The truth of the Catholic Church, points out Chesterton, is like a magnet with powers of attraction and of repulsion. The repulsion arises from the vague fact that one may be caught in a baited trap. But the bait is the simple truth. "The moment men cease to pull against the Catholic Church," he says, "they feel a tug toward it. The moment they cease to shout it down they begin to listen to it with pleasure. The moment they try to be fair to it they begin to be fond of it. But when that affection has passed a certain point it begins to take on the tragic and menacing grandeur of a great love affair."

"Trysting-place of All Truths"

There is something majestic in the manner in which the Church has withstood all the heresies of the centuries and all the vagaries of human thought and speculation. The procession of paganism, bibliolatry, absolute imperialism, monarchies, democracies, representative or alleged, down to dictatorships, the fashion of the hour, pass before her in a long parade. From her throne on the stairs of the centuries she watches them come and go. She can live under any form of government because her concern is with the souls of men and her kingdom is of the spirit.

"There is no end," says Chesterton, "to the dissolution of ideas, the destruction of all tests of truth, that has become possible since men abandoned the attempt to keep a central and civilized Truth, to contain all truths and trace out and refute all errors. Since then, each group has taken one truth at a time and spent the time in turning it into a falsehood. We have had nothing but movements; or in other words, monomanias. But the Church is not a movement but a meeting place; the trysting-place of all the truths in the world."

"The Church is a house with a hundred gates," he observes, "and no two men enter at exactly the same angle." The path which this gifted mind traveled was that of objective evidence and logical reasoning. The mysterious attraction of the Church is found upon investigation to be simply the fact that she is the truth. This was the object of his long quest. He embraced the Church as a wayward son embraces the mother from whom he has long been separated but whom he has never ceased to love. In her tender arms, he finds rest and peace at last. Thus does the Church continue to draw the finest minds to her with the irresistibility with which the magnet draws the steel. Thus the trek toward Rome goes on.

