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LONDON, SATURDAY, JULY 14, 1928

### A SINCERE AND HUMBLE CATHOLIC

Giovanni Papini, now forty-two years old, was until four years ago, an extreme radical, anarchist and atheist. He has published twenty-three volumes which have run into fifty-seven editions. After his conversion to the Catholic faith he set himself to write his world-famous *Life of Christ* which was published in Italian less than two years ago and is now available in translations in many other languages. Translated into English by Dorothy Canfield Fisher it is published by Harcourt Brace & Co., New York. Reviews innumerable have been written from all points of view. Condescending "liberals" and free-thinkers, as a matter of course, minimize his defection from their ranks and insinuate that he cannot long remain a sincere Catholic; patronizing Protestants almost appropriate him outright, as "a liberal evangelical Catholic with nothing of the dogmatic Roman Catholic about him." So an authentic picture of Papini the man and the Catholic may be opportune.

Mr. Charles Phillips, M. A., was in Rome about the time of the publication of Papini's *Life of Christ* in Italy and first heard of it from the pulpit. "When the work of a man known for years as one of the foremost radical writers in Italy," writes Mr. Phillips in the *Catholic World*, "is recommended from the altar within a stone's throw of the Vatican—within hearing of the Congregation of the Index—then, said I, it is time to look into it." Charmed by the beauty and spirit of the work whose charm has since proved universal, Mr. Phillips sought and obtained an interview with its famous author. An unfavorable impression from the "atrocious portraits of him printed in the papers" was at once dispelled on meeting the "tall, spare man, easily over six feet in height, erect and soldierly, with a face at once strong and astonishingly youthful."

The interview was filled with interesting things; but we must confine ourselves to the account of his conversion which is given here in Papini's own words:

"As you see, I followed through many philosophies, through many schools of literature, religion, thought, and so on—but little by little they all convinced me of one thing, the weakness and insufficiency of human opinions. It was not through them that I was to reach Absolute Truth. And nothing but the absolute could satisfy me.

"So I went on. But no, not any particular personal event precipitated my conversion. (As you see, it was not precipitate at all.) It was one big universal fact—the War.

"At first I took the War with the everyday indifference that characterized so many of us. But in 1916 I began to suffer, I myself, from all that was afflicting the world—the misery of it, the ferocity, the falsehood, the death! Then I really began to ponder how men, civilized men, could have fallen to such degradations. I thought and read, thought and read—until finally I turned to the story of Christ, the study of the Gospels. And in the light of that study I soon discovered that the same terrible things, more or less according to proportion and form, had always been happening for the same old reasons.

"The question was, how to make them happen less often—how, in fact, to put a stop to them altogether. All our external systems—of politics, economics, etc., were good for nothing. Changing our social regimes—Democracy, Communism, and so on—were equally useless. They did not alter the fact. What was to be done? What did the world need?

"I arrived at the conclusion that we must change the spirit of man. To leave it as it is, is to simply keep on going wrong, perpetuating the evil. We must change our instincts.

"How was that to be achieved?

What was the doctrine which most perfectly revealed such a transformation—the actual changing of the instincts of man? That of the Gospels. Coming to this conclusion I rested a little while, having laid hand on the moral system of the evangelists. I was convinced now of my immortal soul. But of course that was not enough. There was one step more—from the law of Absolute to the Absolute Itself. Logically, I passed from the moral system of the Gospels to Christ. And Christ led me into the Church—that is the only true Church, the Catholic Church, the Church of Rome.

"This was in 1917, my first turning to the Gospels. In 1916 I had gone into a sort of solitary confinement to study and meditate. Then, the year following I went to Rome to become literary editor of *Il Tempo*. But by 1918 I had again reached such a mental state that I was obliged to give up my work and once more seek solitude for thought and study. What I call my 'first' conversion took place at that time—that is, to partial or evangelical Christianity.

"But I was still unsatisfied. I must go on. I must pursue the thing to the end. In 1919 I had begun the writing of a new book—but I never finished it. I interrupted it to commence the *Storia di Cristo*. That year I entered the Church."

Nothing of the mental strain and turmoil of spirit, comments Mr. Phillips, which Papini has experienced shows in his quiet, self-contained personality. All the struggle is definitely a thing of the past. He feels, he says, like a man who has been climbing all his life until now he has gained those highest levels above which there is nothing but sky and light.

If, after reading this searching bit of autobiography, there be still some who think the author of the *Life of Christ* is a sort of half-Protestant Catholic what follows ought to dispel the illusion. In the *New York Times Magazine* R. Heylbut Woolstein thus summarizes a preface to a new volume, in Italian, (*The Dictionary of a Savage*):

"Papini protests against the modern world, which has been in a state of decay upward now of five centuries; against the humanistic revolution, that reinstated the sway of paganism; against the Protestant revolution, that shattered Christianity, substituting the anarchy of free investigation for the sacred authority of Rome; against the industrial revolution, that brutalized the world, reduced mankind to a state of serfdom, and substituted quantity for quality, matter for spirit and gold for peace; against the philosophic revolution, that furthered the spread of doubt by placing reason before faith; against democracy, that curtailed liberty and introduced the domination of the brutal, incompetent masses; against the communistic revolution, which, under the guise of alleviating economic inequality, brought still greater injustices in its train; and, finally, against 'all the barbaric innovations that delight the present-day imbecile'—the bar, the cinema, the phonograph, the elevator, the telephone, the automobile, the motorcycle, the side car, the airplane, the adoration of scientific materialism, the cult of speed and the obscene ways of seeking pleasure."

We need not here go into the plan of this latest work further than to quote this sentence from the reviewer:

"All of the items are 'defined' in much the same way. The fact at issue is thoroughly scoured, in vivid Papinian language, and the cause of its viciousness is signalled in its failure to adhere to the spiritual standards of the Catholic Church."

The *Catholic World*, (May,) in its review of the English translation of

the *Life of Christ*, says: "Mrs. Fisher's translation is excellently done, but we regret the omission of the 'Prayer to Christ' at the end, perhaps the most beautiful passage in the entire book, which contains Papini's profession of faith in Jesus Christ and in His Church."

A curious omission.

The Church to Papini is the Holy Roman Catholic Church and none other. The vague, undefined and unreal thing that Protestants now call "The Church" has no meaning for him, nor for any Catholic.

Mr. Phillips' article from which we quoted above, concludes with these words of Papini:

"I am not worrying about the future; certainly not about the future of the Church. I rejoice to note the progress the Faith is making in English-speaking countries—especially in the United States. Your Catholic churchmen are well known here. The late Cardinal Gibbons was very popular in Italy and his writings are widely read.

"A great renaissance of the Faith is coming. It will be felt everywhere, in the Latin countries as well as in those less traditionally Catholic."

Even condescending liberals and patronizing Protestants, if they knew more of their subject, would concede that Papini is frankly, sincerely, integrally and humbly Catholic; and nothing else.

### DOCTRINAL DISRUPTION

"Justification by faith alone" was the corner-stone of the so-called Reformation. Good works were "works of supererogation" presumptuously added to the "finished work of the Redeemer."

For a long time the swing of the pendulum has been in the opposite direction until now faith means nothing at all that an agnostic might not subscribe to. Earnest and sincere Protestants alarmed at the manifest tendency to discard all doctrine, to sweep aside the Christian faith as of no more importance than other opinions held in unenlightened past ages, have tried to stem the tide and earned the open scorn of the proud and boastful Modernists. *Zion's Herald* (Boston, Methodist), asks the obvious question: "Will the logic of this inquiry regarding doctrines carry us to the point where no doctrine remains, or is there a stopping-place somewhere along the way where a determined Christianity will be required to say to the spirit of criticism, 'Thus far shalt thou go and no farther?' " *Zion's Herald* denounces "heresy-hunting" and boasts that "these days are happily gone, and will never return. But the Church today is laying itself liable to the even more fatal criticism of believing so much that it believes nothing at all."

But this writer would save "The Church" and liberalism, also, somewhere on the steeply inclined plane leading to the abyss. He says:

"The only way the liberalism of the present hour can be sustained and given balance is to rescue the spirit of inquiry from the domination of those whose emotions are not amenable to reason and whose gushing utterances on theology and doctrine are mere opinions. The liberalising influence now at work within the Church will continue, but it must continue in the hands of those whose devotion to Christ has not been infected with the mental jazz of quick theologians who know considerably more of political utopias than of gospel redemption."

"There are not a few reformers who are offering the Church the kingdoms of this world if only the Church will fall down and worship some kind of shadowy, ill-defined humanity. Those reformers sputter a great deal about fatherhood and brotherhood, but their vaguely conceived humanity is nothing more than the corpse of Auguste Comte's 'humanity' buried by an exasperated intelligence a hundred years ago."

"What we need is not less preaching about humanity but more preaching about God and Jesus Christ. If the Church is to have no firmer foundation than the ethical and moral idealism of modern humanitarian cults, then confusion and disaster await us in the future. Let the Church beware lest in its eagerness to save the world it be devoured by the world."

"The Church of today needs a Pentecostal revival of power, and that revival will never come unless the Church believes something and believes that something tremen-

dously. We do not want any more static, ecclesiastically fixed doctrine from which there can be no deviation. We do not want any more doctrinal bigotry that is always threatening dissenters with trials for heresy. We do not want any more pharisaic search for exactness and strict conformity to doctrinal precepts. What we do want is a doctrine as functional as life itself, a doctrine that will progressively serve each new day in which we live, but none the less a doctrine to which we cling with the tenacity and faith of our fathers."

Here we have a sincere and earnest soul clinging to the idea of "the Church," but "the Church" is without authority to teach in Christ's name. He longs for such a Church, sees its evident necessity, but denies it the essential and indispensable attribute with which our Divine Lord clothed the Church which He founded and commissioned to teach in His name; that Church which enjoys the glorious privilege of infallibility and infallibility: Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world; and I will send the Spirit of Truth who will teach you all things and abide with you forever.

There is too much of the pathetic in the following declaration of the Methodist organ to allow us to smile at its woeful inconsistency:

"There is a place for doctrine in the Christian Church. When there is no longer a place for doctrine, the Church will cease to exist. A doctrineless Church may continue as a sort of community club-house and neighborhood festival board, but it will never be the power of God unto salvation. The average community is well equipped with bowling-alleys and swimming pools and club-house facilities. What every community needs, more than it needs anything else, is a prophet's pulpit where the eternal verities of God's imperishable truth are preached with inspiration and conviction. The truth that God our Father; that Jesus Christ, in some mystical yet soul-satisfying way, is our Saviour; that sin is a blinding, cursing reality with more than subjective dimensions; that the power of God in a man's life is the only force sufficient to overcome sin and conquer through righteousness."

Biased, unconsciously and subconsciously, yet to the very depth of his soul, against a divinely commissioned Church, its Founder ever-present and the guiding Spirit of God ever abiding in it, this Methodist Christian, nevertheless, sets forth eloquently and cogently the compelling reasons for just such a Church if Christian doctrine is to survive. To the Omnipotent and Omniscient God, to His divine Son at once God and Man, all this like all other things past, present and to come, was known when He founded His Church. But the ingrained Protestant Tradition has so warped the judgment and obscured the vision of the writer we have been quoting that he cannot see that what he longs for with all his soul is there before his eyes—a city set upon a hill.

And his idea of the Church he so hedges about with conditions and reservations that will save his cherished "liberalism" that he does not even suspect the glorious liberty enjoyed by the children of God in the one true fold of the Good Shepherd.

His irreducible minimum is like all other human attempts to define the Christian creed: a pious, admirable, so far as it goes, but an utterly impotent, personal aspiration, not the teaching as of one having authority.

The whole Presbyterian body recently adopted in General Assembly five points of doctrine as the irreducible minimum of their simplified creed. Then, two weeks later, the Presbytery of New York admitted to the ministry and ordained two candidates who found the five points too great a strain on their faith. Even before this, a prominent Presbyterian minister from his pulpit in New York, the first Sunday after the definition promulgation of the simplified Presbyterian creed, took pains to deny, publicly and categorically, each of the five points or articles. Apparently with boastful pride he declared his *disbelief* in "the innerness of Scripture, in the Virgin birth of Christ, in a particular theory of the death of Christ on the Cross, in the physical resurrection of Our Lord, and in the

veracity and genuineness of the miracles attributed to Jesus." And in the same sermon, he further declared that the issue is "squarely between Scripture, literalism and truth. The Bible is not our chain forever to fasten faith to its incredibility."

And even this minister of the Gospel, Dr. Mason Clarke, might, according to the *Zion's Herald*, be competent to fill the prophet's pulpit proclaiming the eternal verities! For he has not yet denied that "God is our father; and that Jesus Christ, in some mystical yet soul-satisfying way, is our Saviour."

God help them. It is a duty of gratitude to God, as well as one of Christian charity for us who have the inestimable grace of the true Faith to join, heart and soul, daily in the Church's prayer: That Thou wouldst bring back to the Unity of the Church all those who have strayed away and lead to the light of the Gospel all unbelievers: We beseech Thee hear us.

### A DIFFICULT LAW BOOK AND NO TEACHER

By THE OBSERVER

The utter lack of any discussion on doctrine at the recent session of The Presbyterian Assembly at Port Arthur when the decision was finally reached to go in with the Methodists to form a united church, is not unnatural when we consider what was the original error of all the heretical sects and how that error has permeated and vitiated all the developments of those sects from the commencement of the so-called Reformation. When the leaders of the rebellion threw off the authority of the Church and attempted to improve on the plan made by Christ for the preservation of His truth in the minds and hearts of men, they had to put something in the place of that authority. They put the Bible in place of it; that is, they did so on theory; for Luther and Calvin and Knox had no idea of getting along without exercising authority as teachers.

No Pope ever claimed more comprehensive authority than those men claimed. They were extremely intolerant of any individual exercise of the individual right of private judgment which in theory they admitted and even taught to their followers. But they died and they had no successors who maintained the same prestige. They were succeeded by weaker men; and though they did, especially in the Presbyterian Church, exercise a pretty strong supervision over the faith of their adherents, that authority gradually faded away. In the Methodist Church too, Mr. Wesley claimed great prerogatives as a definer and teacher; but the idea of authoritative teaching did not last in that Church as long as it had lasted in the Church of Scotland; and Methodism came to be a mere system of religious revivals, as they were called, in which anything like dogma would not have been accepted, and in which spiritual vagueness was the distinguishing characteristic.

And so the Bible, always over-emphasised, fell at last to the low position of being all things to all men; a position which it would have reached sooner had it not been that the founders of the heretical sects were not at all minded to be consistent about the matter and did actually assert an authority to which on theory they admitted they had no right. The idea of the Bible alone without a teacher reached its highest point of popularity in the tenth century, when there began that vast work of wasted endeavor, the carrying of the Bible to every individual under the sun, heathen as well as Christian. How Luther would have raved and thundered had he seen the British and American Bible Societies starting their work, and seen the millions of money they spent on that utterly mistaken and morally unprofitable labor. There is a touch of the pathetic always in the sight of well-meant effort, on a huge scale, wasted because of a mistake in the take-off, to use an aviation term. I suppose it must have come home to many Protestants long ago that there is a deep color of folly in distributing the Bible to Chinese and Indians and Africans and Malays and all the other races which sit in darkness in the hope that they will find moral and religious truth in that most difficult of books, without a teacher and one who can speak with authority. It may very well be

that the consideration of that very great folly has done much to weaken such religious beliefs as the disintegration of centuries of private judgment had left to thoughtful Protestants. It does not seem likely that there are many today who still believe that anything substantial is to be accomplished for the spread of Christianity by the mere handing round to all the races of men of an extremely difficult book without any key or clue to its meaning which can be depended upon in case of doubt.

The natural and inevitable results have come to pass. Starting with a principle that was entirely false, Protestantism has come to make little of the Bible on which it once placed the whole of its faith. Being unable to maintain a consistent system of religion by the mere use of a book which fairly called aloud for authoritative explanation, Protestantism first split up into hundreds of sects, and is now trying to achieve unity not by agreeing on doctrines so much as by getting along almost wholly without doctrines.

### NOTES AND COMMENTS

WE HEAR a great deal about "town-planning" these days. Corporations everywhere are interesting themselves in not only the betterment of the individual dwelling but in the general improvement of the municipality. The aesthetic, too long neglected in civic life on this continent, begins to give some promise of coming into its own. In this connection town-planners might turn with profit to St. Thomas Aquinas who in his "Political Economy" has laid down the fundamental principles which should govern the foundation of civic communities. That the "Angel of the Schools" had a true appreciation of the beautiful no student of his will require to be told. That he had also a firm grasp of the practical is apparent in every line of his philosophy.

ON THE subject of city founding St. Thomas says: "It is necessary that the site chosen for building the city should, by its healthiness, not only be fitted for keeping the citizens in health, but it should by its fertility suffice for their food." "There are," he continues, "two ways whereby a city may have a sufficiency of things. The first is through the fertility of the place which yields abundantly everything needed for human life. The second is through trading, whereby the necessities of life are brought from foreign parts. The first way is clearly seen to be the better. . . . A city having its sufficiency from its own lands is nobler than one which abounds through trading, for the latter produces strife, vice and unemployment." It was through neglect of these fundamental principles that during the late War many nations found themselves on the very brink of disaster.

A WRITER in "The Teachers' Assistant," an Anglican Sunday-School periodical, has been enlarging upon the "Notes" or signs, by which honest searchers after truth may distinguish the "One True Church," and apparently oblivious to the fact that he is quoting almost the very words of St. Augustine, as applied to the Catholic and Roman Church, says: "If you were to go into a strange city with a multitude of churches, the first thing to do would be to find out the Apostolic Church, that is, the Church which is ruled by the Apostles' successors, viz., Bishops, and then you would feel certain that you had found the Church which is being guided by the Spirit into all truth."

THIS, AND much more in similar vein, a correspondent of the Canadian Churchman stigmatizes as "a piece of Anglo-Catholic propaganda of the worst kind" and calls for an investigation, and the dismissal from the staff of the writer responsible for it. "We cannot permit such teaching in an official organ of our Church," he writes. "It is enough to ruin, and it certainly will injure the General Board of Religious Education, which in the last analysis is responsible for the publication."

THE ARTICLE in question is more than "Anglo-Catholic propaganda"—it is rank "popery," were the writer clear in his ideas or consistent in his professions. But the trouble with these "Anglo-Cath-

olics" is that they are neither. Deftly eluding the substance they run after the shadows, and seeking to deceive others as they certainly deceive themselves they end up nowhere. The Churchman correspondent while characteristically making the affair an occasion for ignorant and vulgar diatribe against "Rome," is quite right in his contention that whatever else the "Anglo-Catholic propaganda" may be it is not the Church of England, the latter being purely Protestant in its origin, its traditions and in every fibre of its being.

THE RECENT advent to Canada of a body of emigrant crofters from the Scottish Highlands is a reminder of not only the debt Canada owes to Scotland for several earlier migrations of the kind, but of the deleterious effect the conditions which have brought them about have had upon Scotland itself. Divested of verbiage the truth is that these people have been driven from their hill-sides to make room for deer. A century ago there were only 5 deer forests in Scotland; today there are 180, of an aggregate extent of 3,432,385 acres. Half of Inverness-shire is given up to deer. From the estates of the Duke of Sutherland alone, 15,000 persons have been banished from their homes, that a soulless aristocracy might have increased facilities for "sport."

MILLIONAIRES, it must be added, have no more regard for tourists than for Scotsmen. Of the 648 mountains in Scotland higher than 3,000 feet, over 450 have been closed to the public. In Ross-shire but one peak out of 95 is still accessible to the people. The millionaire argues that deer are more remunerative than human beings, and as they rule Scotland nothing more is to be said. Under these circumstances it is any wonder that thinking Scots look back to pre-Reformation times with longing eyes?

### U. S. SUPREME COURT'S DECISION

#### THOUGHT TO FORESHADOW DECISION AGAINST OREGON LAW

Washington, June 11.—By a vote 7-5, Justice Holmes and Sutherland dissenting, the Supreme Court of the United States has held the Nebraska and foreign language law unconstitutional and has handed down similar decisions on cases involving other laws on the same subject passed by Ohio and Iowa. The effect of the decision is believed will be to nullify laws prohibiting the teaching of German or other foreign languages, passed by many States during and immediately after the War. Such statutes, the Supreme Court decided, constitute an unlawful infringement upon the liberties guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution.

#### ORIGIN OF TEST CASE

The case came before the Federal Court on an appeal from a decision of the Supreme Court of Nebraska taken by Robert T. Meyer who had been convicted under the State law for having taught the German language to a child who had not completed the eighth grade, in the parochial school maintained by the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Congregation. By the provisions of the Nebraska law under which he was convicted, the use of any language other than English as the medium of instruction in any school was prohibited, and the teaching of a foreign language as a language only was prohibited until after the child had completed the eighth grade. Violations of this law were made misdemeanors punishable by fine or imprisonment.

It was claimed by the plaintiffs who brought the case before the Supreme Court on appeal that this law interfered with religious freedom since it prevented religious instruction from being given in the language to which the children were accustomed, and that it infringed upon the rights guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. Counsel for the State contended that the law was a proper use of the State police power.

In the majority decision read by Justice McReynolds it is stated: "Evidently the Legislature has attempted materially to interfere with the calling of modern language teachers, with the opportunities of pupils to acquire knowledge, and with the power of parents to control the education of their own children."

"The individual" the decision continues, "has certain fundamental rights which must be respected. The protection of the Constitution extends to all, to those who speak other languages as well as those born with English on the tongue."

On the basis of the principles laid down in this decision the Federal Supreme Court at the same time announced the reversal of the decision of the Nebraska Supreme