

The Catholic Record

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LONDON, SATURDAY, OCT. 21, 1922 G. K. CHESTERTON AND HIS CRITICS

Recently Mr. Chesterton gave briefly to the English correspondent of the Toronto Star some of his principal, practical reasons for leaving the Church of England and joining the Catholic Church. He explained that for twenty years at least he believed in the Catholic view of Christianity. "Unless the Church of England was a branch of the Catholic Church I had no use for it. If it were a Protestant Church I did not believe in it." This narrowed the question down to the Catholic claims of the Church of England, or to the claims made on its behalf, by a certain section of its membership.

With characteristic paradox, Mr. Chesterton went on to say that it was leading Protestants who had converted him to Catholicism. "Among the people who have helped me to answer the question as to whether the Church of England was Catholic," he explained, "are the chief Protestant leaders in the Church of England; for instance, Dr. Inge, Dean of St. Paul's, and Bishop Hensley Henson, Bishop of Durham. They have done me this good service and I wish to express my gratitude to them for it. They have done me the best service one man can do to another. I will give you examples.

"It appears to me quite clear that any church claiming to be an authoritative church must be quite definite when great questions of public morals are put. Can I go in for cannibalism or the murder of babies to reduce the population, or any other scientific and progressive reform? Any church with authority to teach must say whether it can be done. But the Protestant churches are in utter bewilderment on these moral questions; for example, on birth control, on divorce, on spiritualism; and one could mention other questions like suicide.

"When you have people, and such sincere men as Dean Inge, coming out publicly and definitely as champions for what I regard as a low and poisonous trick not far removed from infanticide, you can see what I mean. It is perfectly true that there are in the Church of England and other Protestant bodies, many who would denounce these heathen vices as much as I can. Bishop Gore, (retired Bishop of Oxford), would speak about them as strongly as the Pope. But the point is the Church of England does not speak strongly. In short it has no unity of action. It cannot give a common reply to people when they ask.

"I have no use for a church which is not a church militant, which cannot order battle and fall in line and march in the same direction. "It would take me too long to discuss all arguments," Mr. Chesterton said in conclusion, "but those are the principal, practical reasons."

Now that strikes one as a fairly lucid and forceful presentation of a notorious fact, the consideration of which has driven others before this great publicist either to find in the Catholic Church that living voice of divine authority in matters of faith and morals, or to the despairing conclusion that God has given no such guide to men. We think, however, that The Star correspondent should have warned Mr. Chesterton that there was a lamentable dearth of humor amongst some of the readers of his newspaper. He might then have given an explanatory foot-note to this characteristic sentence that has aroused the indignation of several Toronto critics: "Can I go in for cannibalism or the murder of babies to reduce the population, or any other scientific or progressive reform?" "Sounds like Chester-

ton," sapiently remarks Dr. Seager, provost of Trinity. Yes, it does; in fact it is Chesterton at his forceful and lucid best. And when Chesterton refers to birth control—a scientific and progressive reform now disgustingly familiar to every one—as "a low and poisonous trick not far removed from infanticide" he clearly indicates that this is one of those great questions of public morals on which any Church claiming to be an authoritative Church must be quite definite. There is no escaping his meaning. No Christian who believes that Christ founded a Church with divine authority to teach in His name but will look to that Church for a pronouncement, clear, definite, unequivocal. If the great writer sometimes humorously exaggerates for the sake of emphasis, he is here in stern, literal earnest. To this the interviewer gently yet pointedly called Dr. Seager's attention. "Many people," remarked the reporter, "make a distinction between the prevention of conception and the prevention of birth." The Anglican dignitary replied: "That distinction is a matter for the State not for the Church!" Chesterton has a humor that is conscious and purposeful; evidently there are other kinds.

Many clergymen of several of the varieties of Protestantism that make no claim to be Catholic are very indignant in their comments; but Mr. Chesterton made it quite clear that for the last twenty years, at least, their claims did not interest him. It was simply the question whether or not the Church of England was really Catholic as is claimed, not, as every one knows, by the united voice of her membership or her officers, yet seriously claimed, as the following remarks of Archdeacon Ingles show.

According to The Star, the Archdeacon makes this profession of Catholic faith: "The Church of England dates back to the days of our Lord," the archdeacon stated to The Star, "and it has never changed in its basic doctrines. At the time of the Reformation it was purged of certain evil practices which had crept in, but that is just like a man washing his face. There is no change in the man himself. I would not belong to a Church dating from the Reformation, and I do not believe you will find any Anglican who does not know that our Church has stood without change since long centuries before the Reformation."

"Then the Roman church in England is strictly speaking an offshoot of the Church of England?" asked The Star. "Certainly," replied Archdeacon Ingles, "the Roman church in England broke away from our church in 1570 under Pius V. There was no change in our doctrines or beliefs."

"Then you are the true Catholic Church?" asked the reporter again. "The Church of England is Catholic," stated Archdeacon Ingles. "We are not Protestant. How can we be Protestant when we existed in our present beliefs centuries before the Reformation? You will not find our church documents referring to us as Protestant. The coronation oath makes mention of the Protestant religion, but that is a State affair, not an ecclesiastical."

Just a "State affair" like birth control with Dr. Seager! And, though Archdeacon Ingles may not believe it, we have found an Anglican who does not seem to know anything about the Catholicity of Anglicanism. His brother Anglican and fellow-Torontonian, Canon Dyson Hague, is thus reported:

"How can any man of Chesterton's intellect," he asked, "hold such opinions regarding the Church of England's relation to the Roman Catholic Church? Chesterton must know that the Anglican Church is a separate entity and wholly Protestant. He must know that the official title of the Anglican Church in the United States for example, is the 'Protestant Episcopal Church' and that is similarly mentioned in English legal statutes, and its Protestantism made equally plain by the coronation oath of British monarchs."

"We are a branch of the Catholic church," Canon Hague explained, "but not of the Catholic church as Chesterton means it—not of the Roman Catholic church. By 'Catholic Church' the Anglican means all people professing Christianity. The Church of Rome's claim to the word is unhistorical and it is unfortunate that its meanings have become so vague." If by "Catholic Church" the Anglican means "all people professing Christianity" there is no denying the Anglican claim which Mr. Chesterton has found invalid; but that is not the "Anglo-Cath-

olic" claim, nor is it that of Archdeacon Ingles, nor that which Mr. Chesterton finally rejected. Principal Gandier of Knox College does not play fast and loose with the term Catholic; he evidently knows precisely what the Catholic position is and where it is logically held. In the course of an interview with The Star he said:

"I have read and admired a great deal of Chesterton's writings, and have recognized his profound religious nature, but I have always been under the impression that he was a Roman Catholic. In my judgment, those taking up what is called the Anglo-Catholic position (which involves the idea of direct Apostolic Succession) must if they are logical, eventually go over to Rome."

The Star interviewed a host of Protestant clergymen and published their comments on Mr. Chesterton's reasons for becoming a Catholic. The specimens we have culled are an amusing, if somewhat pathetic, illustration of those very reasons.

AS OTHERS SEE US

It happened about ten years ago. A Canadian Protestant gentleman noticed a display advertisement in the office window of a lawyer in his home town. It was there announced that a lecture on the iniquity of Catholics was to be delivered in the town on a stated date. He went to hear the lecturer, and made it so uncomfortable for the propagandist of hate that the matter was referred to in the local newspaper. Then a Catholic business man in another town wrote to our defender to thank him for what he had done. We give the reply. It is a letter from a friendly critic. We may not—rather, our readers may not accept all it contains as well founded; but all will certainly find food for thought. Following is the letter:

Dear Sir,—Your letter was duly received. I only did my duty to truth and justice. I saw the placard or poster of the lecture in the office window of the day of its delivery and anticipated some of its contents; hence my presence, challenge, and denunciation. The lecture in material statement was a tissue of vicious calumnies too gross for consumption by any one but groundlings and those who live to feed their souls on filth. But the Protestant world is full of such and of those who use them for political purposes. The latter are the worse of the two classes, for they lead a double life, practicing deceit upon Catholics and Protestants alike. There is nothing Catholics need more education for than in ability to defend themselves against Protestant duplicity. You must close your ranks tightly and pull down your political differences to a minimum if you want to weaken or destroy Protestant political adverse influence. Protestantism is a far greater enemy today than it ever has been in that it is resorting to more secret and subtle methods of persecution. I do not speak of that mighty army of Protestant agnostics to whom we owe statutory toleration and liberty of conscience, but I speak of those who still support Protestant worship and missions. These are the enemy whom Christ despises. There is no doubt that when the money bags do not run the churches, their people will in time join the ranks of the Socialists in their opposition to the Catholic Church. But even so the great danger I see in the future both to society and to the Catholic Church is not so much from Socialism as it will be from secret oath societies. Against these Catholics are not in a position to defend themselves, nor will be until every Catholic young man and woman in the world is a member of some society whose object is not only religion, benevolence and education, but the express and explicit defence of the Catholic Church against Protestant political intolerance. Protestants are beginning to see that Catholics are not politically united as once they used to be when openly persecuted, and are putting in the thin end of the wedge. Give Protestants every political remunerative job in the world and you may live in peace and poverty. If you are prepared for that you have nothing to do but go to Mass and tell your beads. And it is every manner of getting moony and influence that secret societies are after, and the latter that they may get the former. You are only in the beginning of their numerical strength and influence. When the babies shall have become giants you shall feel the blow before you realize the hand that strikes. They have all one purpose in common, however much they may outwardly appear to be severed and that is not the physical, but the social and political death of Catholics. You must be the hewers of wood and drawers of water for Protestants. There is scarcely a Protestant minister today of any church who is not a member of several secret societies. This is his road to success; and woe to him who holds aloof. You now know why they are silent when Catholics are unjustly assailed.

What you need is strong militant

Catholics with the backbone of the men of Ulster in Ireland, but without their suspicion, distrust or hate. If you are content with the just things-god spirit and a passive capacity for suffering, you'll get all you want of it under the British flag as elsewhere. Witness Portugal, France, Italy, and the day will come for Spain, Belgium, Austria, etc., unless Catholics are trained for political life. Witness the Chateausy election in Quebec. How many of you who for forty-six years Protestants were chosen in that overwhelmingly Catholic constituency?—as the enclosed excerpts will show, if I am not mistaken. Catholics are certainly not politically wise and the sooner the cause of this is discovered the better. I have my own judgment on this matter and I am persuaded I am not wrong. If you think it your duty to appease the suspicions and bigotry of Protestants you are displaying a weakness which Protestants not only do not respect but utterly despise, and if Catholics have not yet learned that Protestants nowhere in the world reciprocate the compliment they are blind to a fault and reap the harvest they are sowing.

Secret societies will dominate sooner or later municipal and educational politics in league with socialists in every country in the world unless the Catholic nations wake up and organize. The energy of silent prayer will not do: the energy of work and vigilance are also necessary. You must keep your grip upon all national institutions, including the Press, Universities, Governments, Armies and Navies, and if you are content to abide silent in poverty in your own denominational institutions, and leave the others to the Protestants you'll make a few suffering saints no doubt, but you'll have whole nations of Catholic peoples steeped in ignorance, poverty and fit subjects or material for every kind of political and religious schemer. Political and economical education are the need of the hour among Catholics. Poverty in my judgment is nothing to be proud of—no virtue in itself, and riches not loved, but used aright, will do more for the kingdom of God here and hereafter than ignorance or poverty. You need instead of denominational weeklies, a secular Catholic press—that is a press capitalized by Catholic funds, hence my presence, challenge, and telling the whole truth about everything—independent, which Protestants can respect and will read because it is not the mouthpiece of a bishop, but the organ of truth. Such a press, sternly Catholic, but absolutely truthful, will do more good in severing the shattered forces of reunited Christianity than an hundred times the little baronial societies, whose members are modest, prayerful, and demure, have cultivated the humble spirit to suffer and be silent, but have not the moral courage for an open soldier's fight and sacrifice. But the press like the National institutions is left largely in the hands of the Protestant and agnostic world, and hence Catholic results in Portugal, France, South America, etc. Almost every Provincial University in this country today is run by Protestants, and unless where, in one or two places, a Catholic College is affiliated to a University, there is hardly a Catholic on the teaching staff of one of them, while ministers of all denominations, but principally Presbyterians, are among the faculties from the President down. These institutions are largely moulding the life of the nation and Catholics have no share in it. They have a prestige and an influence far beyond their deserts and even where no public tax supports them, their influence creates an atmosphere far and wide which is pregnant with hostility to Catholics. Catholics should brand the bigot everywhere, whether it be an individual or an institution, and should learn to restrain his bigotry by touching his purse. But they never do. Catholic clients will still patronize—who displayed on his law office window the orange flag in their teeth, and he must know something of their characteristic weaknesses of intolerance. You need to make your people a unit, without restraining or suppressing their individualities; to possess them all with a common knowledge of the enemy, his tricks in intercourse and his strategies in battle. You must deliberately canvass every young Catholic man and woman and organize them. They must know each other as members, have a common purpose, common weapons, knowledge in common—circle within circle till the inmost circle is reached, where supreme knowledge and supreme authority abides and supreme commands are issued. Protestants will respect you when they dread you but not till then. I speak of course of the rank and file of Protestants, not of supreme culture or virtue. The rank and file of Protestants abide in sin unrepentant and must necessarily be antagonistic to Catholic truth and Catholic faith. Their inner and outer life to Catholics will seldom be in harmony. They are opportunists by instinct and training. A subtle duplicity is the essence of their religion. A Catholic is safe only when he is on his guard. I am writing of a general principle, not of exceptions, and exceptions I am thankful to say there are not a few but many.

CANADA AND THE WAR

By THE OBSERVER Mr. Lloyd George explains that he did not exactly ask us to take part in the expected war; but that he merely gave us a chance to say whether we should like to take part. As though, for instance, it were some sort of special privilege which we should probably hate to miss. It has been noticed that the news of the English invitation was cabled to the press of this country before the official communication was sent to Ottawa from London; which shows that it was given out to the news agencies at London before it was put on the cables for transmission to the Canadian Government. Sometimes in matters of this sort, there is a little finesse used; though if Mr. Lloyd George was merely extending to us a special privilege, not caring greatly whether we accepted it or not, or at least not wishing to influence us in our decision, it is not easy to see why any finesse should have been thought necessary.

The situation is, for Canada, a peculiar one. Several times in the last three years, I have endeavored to draw the attention of the readers of the RECORD to the position into which Canada was drifting, in regard to European politics and diplomacy. There is a notion in Canada, amongst some people, that Canada is without any qualification whatever, to be regarded as at war whenever Great Britain is at war. I do not know whether those who think that, have ever thought of the exact position in which the acceptance of that as an absolute rule would place Canada.

There can be no real and substantial home rule or self-government in any country without the power of choosing between peace and war. That is to say, the power of directly choosing and electing, or of defeating the rulers who are to make peace or war.

If that general principle be sound, and I think no one will question its soundness, let us see how it applies to the case of Canada, and to the events of the past four years. How much have we had to say about all that has been said and done in arranging and rearranging, the complex affairs of Europe? We have, it is true, been represented at some of the conferences; but to what extent, and in how far was our representation effective? We were represented at the Paris Conference which led to the Treaty of Versailles; but what of that? The Treaty of Versailles is gone to the scrap heap long ago; and the present mess has been made as the result of a dozen conferences, great and small, which have taken place since that time.

If war comes, it comes, as all men know, and no man denies, by reason of the muddle which has been made by the Great Powers of the Turkish situation. In what way has Canada had any voice in all or any of the plots and plans, the diplomatic and financial scheming, the jockeying for place, the efforts of rival diplomatists, the backing of Greece by England and of Turkey by France? What have we had to do with all that? There are at this moment in England a great many people who say that Lloyd George has made a mess of the diplomatic situation: say they are right or say they are wrong: he was at least their agent; he had their votes; he was obliged to give them some account from time to time of what he was doing in their name and why he was doing it.

Mr. Lloyd George has not had to account to the people of Canada, nor will he ever have to do so, for anything he has done or omitted to do at any time in the past. If we are bound to fight in the war that now threatens it must be upon some principle that is different from those on which the people of England will feel themselves bound to fight in that war. We are not in the same position in any sense whatever. We cannot admit the unlimited obligation of fighting in any war to which English statesmen may commit Englishmen, without negating self-government and representative institutions. If we are bound to fight, it must be for a Canadian reason; not for a reason that is only an English one. There are no doubt men in Canada who will want to go overseas and fight merely because England is fighting; and if so let them go, by all means; but not at Canada's expense; and not as sentry by the Government of this country.

Those who think I am wrong about this might be so good as to explain why we in Canada are to be held bound by every act of statesmen who are in no way responsible to us; and over whose actions we have no control whatever. No greater power can be exercised by one man over another than the power to involve him in a war. English statesmen cannot be given any such power over us Canadians.

If there is any real danger to Canada that is another matter. In such a case we should have to fight whether or not we had had any voice in the proceedings that led to the war.

I do not think it will be seriously pretended that Canada is in any danger; nor the Empire as a whole is in danger. In those circumstances, and being, as we are, financially embarrassed now on account of a war just over, it would be madness for us, for mere sentimental reasons, to allow ourselves to be drawn into another war.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

PRESS DESPATCHES announce the discovery in Rome of a remarkable marble statue of Christ, which archaeologists pronounce to be the product of the third, or beginning of the fourth century. It will now be in order for theologians of the Bishop Reeve type to tell the world once more that the use of statues or images in Christian churches is an innovation of a later or "dark" age.

IN AN address before the Presbyterian synod of Toronto and Kingston, Rev. Dr. Clark, Moderator, reminded his hearers that in their aspirations after "purity" of worship, the reformers had "cut out all the old ornate ritualism of the Middle Ages." This recalls a saying of Josh Billings: "Politeness is dreadful simple if you take the ceremony out of it, but in sifting out the ceremony you often sift out the politeness." That that is just what has in a religious sense resulted from the reformers straining after "purity" is sufficiently evident from the burden of Dr. Clark's address.

IT HAS remained for Archdeacon Ingles, and "Historicus," a correspondent of the Canadian Churchman, to place the coping stone on the up-side-down structure of Anglican "continuity." So far from the pre-reformation Church in England being the Daughter of the Roman Church, the Roman Church is, according to these erudite apostles of continuity, actually the daughter of the Church of England. And so far removed from fact is the claim that Adrian IV. was the only English Pope, that now we are assured, Pope St. Linus, the immediate successor of St. Peter, was an Englishman. Supposing he were, how does that affect the undoubted fact that the forerunners of St. Augustin bore the Roman pallium?

IN THE matter of credal re-adjustments among non-Catholics we are living in suggestive times. The recent conversion of Gilbert Chesterton has, as observed in these columns last week, precipitated an avalanche of conjectures from exponents of the several schools of denominational thought as to the nature and measure of their belief, and to those whose recollection goes back a matter of twenty-five years it is really instructive to note the change that has come over Protestantism in that particular in the interval.

A GENERATION ago the leading denominations made some show of definiteness in belief and of attachment to their inherited formularies; now everything is in the melting pot and every man a law unto himself as to what he may believe or disbelieve. Terminology may hold its own for a time, but, as the moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada said the other day, "it will not do to be bound too closely by catechisms, long creeds, and arbitrary restrictions laid down by the Christian churches many decades ago. It was enough to be sure of the few great fundamentals." But as to what guarantee he has that in the face of the dissolving process which with ever increasing force keeps marching on, he can be sure of even these "few great fundamentals," and who in the event is to define what they are, he was significantly silent. We have already had ample demonstration that even the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene are not immune.

APART FROM the matter of "fundamentals," however, it is interesting to note the developments of the time. It is remarkable that just as creeds relax there arises a disposition to fasten on the externals. If there was one thing more than another that characterized the birth of Presbyterianism in Scotland and has in the intervening centuries been regarded as almost a "fundamental," it is a hatred of forms and ceremonies. The English language did not contain words of sufficient coarseness and malignity for Knox to denounce them, and in pursuance of that idea Scotland was made a barren waste by that worthy's "rascal multitude." Yet Moderator Clark has so far progressed from that idea as to be convinced that "a certain amount of ritualism is almost a necessity." It is well for him that he is not now amenable to the "fathers" of the sixteenth century, or to the Covenanters of the seventeenth or eighteenth. There are no Jenny Geddeses to silence him now, but we venture to say that even a generation ago he would scarcely have dared hazard such a sentiment in any Presbyterian assembly.

ANOTHER event worth noting is the "mea culpa" of the Baptist Professor New at the convocation of McMaster University. The enlightened gentleman told his auditors that not only was the rest of the Dominion of Canada prone to take an unfair attitude towards the people of the Province of Quebec, but that the "greater amount of bigotry in Canada was found among the Protestants, and that a large proportion of this, especially as far as the people of Quebec were concerned, was centred in Toronto." His auditory considered, it is not surprising that such enlightened sentiments brought forth a storm of protest and denunciation. A few years ago there would have been a riot. It is to the Professor's credit that, as the daily papers assure us, he stuck to his guns. Should he ever be a candidate for municipal honors in Toronto, however, or for any place in the public service, he is likely to pay dearly for his temerity.

BOY LIFE

"Talks to Boys" By Rev. J. P. Conroy, S. J. Published by permission of the Queen's Work Press.

GET A LADDER—CONTINUED "You have just now used two words, Steve," answered the Professor, "that I intended to call the class's attention to. I am glad you brought them in. They are the word 'old' and the word 'classic.' Evidently you meant them for slurs on any book. But are they? The word 'old' for example; isn't the very fact that a book is old one of its strongest titles to consideration? You hear of a business house advertising itself as being in business for fifty years; of a bank established 1787; of a university founded 1674—all boldly announcing their age, proud to be old.

"And we ourselves, do we not instinctively choose to deal with them in preference to young business houses, young banks, young universities? Why? Precisely because they are old; because they have stood the test of time and have proved themselves strong and dependable. Indeed, we call them 'old' because they aren't old at all. Other things around them have grown old and have disappeared, but they remain perennially young, better today than ever. It is the same with 'old' books. They have stood all tests. And one of the tests of any good book is that it be not dull.

"Then the word 'classic.' We mean to insult a book when we call it a classic. But do we? What is a classic? Something that has 'class' to it, that's all. We call a horse race a classic when the entries are the pick of the country. Crowds flock to it, especially the experts in horses. It is the most interesting event of the year. We say a baseball team has 'class' when its players are individually skilful and have the intelligence to work together. If a player cannot do this, he retires to the 'bush league,' where he tries to get the skill he needs to enable him to return to where the 'class' is.

"It is the same with the books we call classics. They are the books that have 'class,' that are interesting, and that draw the crowds of experts, the men who know things."