

THE CHURCH IS OUT OF DATE

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LET any group of confessedly modern people gather in one spot, and, whatever their private quarrels and personal disagreements, in this one thing they will heartily agree: The Catholic Church is a nice old museum piece that would look best stuffed.

The Church is an interesting antique, perhaps, but as part and parcel of this stream-line, go-as-fast-as-you-please, set-your-own-pace age, it is an ox-cart blocking traffic at Fifth Avenue and the Park, a lantern-slide lecture on the Holy Land trying to compete with the latest super-special film in colour and sound, smoke-signalling in an age of television.

Now few things give people a more contented feeling of superiority than to decide once and for all that the Church is as dead as a megalosaurus and as out of fashion as scale armour. Something pleasantly final flavours the sentence which dismisses the Church from all serious consideration: "No doubt it served its uses in another and simpler age; but every intellectual man and woman realises that the Church is almost painfully out of date."

And that's that. Only

It turns out that that isn't that. To quite general annoyance, the Church, obtuse to polite dismissals, goes on existing. Admittedly defunct, it has a way of turning up at most disconcerting times and in most exasperating fashion to protest that it is very much alive. In fact, it persists in looking exasperatingly content and perfectly at ease in the most modernesque surroundings. And that is plainly against nature.

For a corpse the Church is quite athletic. For a dodo, it is surprisingly according to the fashion. Either it has found a fountain of youth or it is a singularly robust ghost that will not, in the face of scepticism and conjuring, permit itself to be put down.

ALWAYS MISSTATED.

Now if you who flip open the first pages of this booklet are not a Catholic, let me start with a statement which you will undoubtedly not believe: Almost everything you have ever been told about the Church is wrong. And one of the things you have most frequently been told is that the Church is perhaps history's most notable remains. Practically everything else that you have heard is also incorrect. For the amount of misinformation that is retailed about the Catholic church would fill a complete un-Catholic Encyclopedia.

If you are a Catholic, you will do well, in talking with your non-Catholic friends and associates, to remember that almost everything they believe with greatest assurance about the Church is altogether incorrect. Not that they are deliberately in error, but that they have been deliberately mis-taught. They have not usually refused to see the facts; they have never been permitted to see them, or have been offered as facts the most outrageous flights of human fancy and imagination.

UNKNOWN LAND.

The Catholic Church is far less familiar to the average well-educated modern than are the more esoteric rites of the witch doctors of African bush tribes. The heart of the Church is the world's real terra incognita compared with which the jungles of Paraguay are congested thoroughfares.

For certainly nothing is less known and studied than that which people have discourteously or politely decided is not worth knowing or studying. Nothing could be less visited or more sparsely trodden by explorers than some island which mariners by common consent have agreed long since dropped below the surface of the ocean. Certainly it would be a magnificent waste of time to set out to explore an island that long ago was submerged.

So, in the professedly modern circles, the Church is not given any consideration. It is not known except as an historic curiosity, surviving as might some ancient and withered Turk of uncertain years and dubious ancestry. Mithraic rituals and Sleuserian mysteries, obeah and voodoo rites and Persian sun worship, these things are occasionally studied by the savant. The Catholic Church generally remains outside the reaches of both common interest and elevated scholarship.

WRONG IN PRAISE.

And yet . . .

Well, for a dead and dusty thing, the Church has the most surprising way of forcing itself into the focus of attention. Its surprising recurrence demands explanation. One has to say things about the Church to explain why anything so dead could be so alive. So it is discussed. Things are said about it continuously. And what is said is uniformly wrong.

The Church is praised for things which it regards as of little interest or certainly as of entirely secondary importance. It is praised for its masterful organization, while all the time it is interested in individual human souls. It is praised quite romantically for the beauty of its ritual, while personally, so to speak, the Church is worrying about the instruction of the children of the poor. It gets high praise for its art and for its humanitarian hospital system, while it is troubled that men will not accept some quite outlandish doctrine about a mystical union in the body of a God made man.

WRONG IN BLAME.

In the same fashion the Church is blamed for things it never did and never dreamed of doing, and is criticized for teaching things which all the time it regards as shocking and abhorrent and never for a moment taught. It is accused of opposing democracy, of loving riches, of holding the divine right of kings, or thwarting the expansion and experiments of science, of assuming an ostrich attitude towards the problems and difficulties and objections raised against its position and its teaching by advancing and undulating thought.

It finds attributed to itself the most absurd teachings, many of which it immediately condemned when first taught by its enemies: that all who are not Catholics, for example, are damned to hell; that unbaptised infants suffer eternally; that the marriages of non-Catholics are not true marriages at all; that the Pope can't possibly sin; that it's quite right, if not actually excellent and commendable, to choke pagan and heretical babies in their cradles; that the world was created in six working days that started at midnight Monday and ended with the midnight that divided Saturday from Sunday.

OBSOLETE.

But loudest of all is the cry raised about it and dinned into its consciousness that it is quite out of date.

And who of us, either as a person or an institution, wants to be considered to be out of date?

Now the Catholic with a sense of humour regards all this as acutely funny, even if it is remarkably wrong. The perfect retort of anyone who really knows the Church to those who declaim its out-of-dateness is simply this: "On the contrary, the Church is as modern as the morning's paper and as of-the-minute as tonight's broadcast. It is far, far more of the present than any form of Protestantism; even the already senescent Christian Science. It is not nearly so obsolete as the scientific theories popular some thirty years ago. The Church is the one thing that never really becomes out of date, because it is ageless and timeless with the agelessness and timelessness which is like that of God Himself."

In fact, any Catholic who really knows the Church grows almost impatient with those who spend too much of their time studying or praising the Church's historic past. He feels it rather a waste of time to prod and pry back into antiquity, when he has felt the flowing vitality and intense aliveness, the marvellous grasp on present problems and the alert appreciation of current questions and difficulties and needs that make the Church of the immediate present endlessly adaptable.

WHY THE PAST?

We would be quite safe in disregarding the past. We could well focus on the Church as it is here and now. In fact we come to feel that much precious time and much significant argument is wasted on the past that could profitably be turned upon the impressive present.

Catholics, for example, can prove and have proved conclusively that the Church of the Apostolic age was essentially the same Catholic Church as it exists today. The non-Catholic who knows anything of history replies, "I suppose it was. What's more, it was quite satisfactory for a primitive, nomadic people of those Apostolic days. But

what's that got to do with the entirely readjusted, recognized world of today?"

The Catholic can demonstrate and has demonstrated in relatively simple fashion that for twelve centuries before the Reformation, the Church was so thoroughly Catholic that had a Protestant, by some historic absurdity, strayed into England or France or Germany or Scandinavia between the third and the sixteenth centuries, he would have been regarded in the same puzzled and unrecognizing fashion with which a Buddhist monk or a medicine man of the Australian bush would have been regarded. The non-Catholic historian retorts: " I concede all that. What does it prove ? We left behind us the water-wheel and the wooden plough, the camel caravan and the dog-drawn cart, the quill pen and the hour-glass. Thus, too, in the march of progress, we left the Catholic Church."

THERE WERE SPOTS.

So both Catholic and educated non-Catholic could safely waive the whole matter of the past. By agreement they could forget the past and look at what the Church is doing today, offering today, believing and practising in this immediate present.

There is, for example, the whole matter of the human defects that have spotted the history of the Church. Of course the Church has been disfigured by soiled and selfish churchmen. The Church happens to be manned by the same uncertain, variable, selfish, men, part god, part fool, half hero, half clown, that staff the profession of medicine or law or statecraft or art or letters. It has had to depend upon the ministrations of criminals and dullards as well as saints and scholars, though not, thank heaven, in anything like the same number.

We could concede as black a picture of human failings as a bigot might desire. We might even deepen the shadows of the picture to bring out the remarkable fact that the Church alone of institutions has continued its way despite the faults and limitations, the crimes and ignorances of those who seemed to be responsible for its development and guidance. And we could then urge this escapable fact.

WE LIVE NOW.

We live, not in the past, but in the present. It is the Church of the present which is, to the man who really knows it, gloriously satisfying. While the non-Catholic historian may study the past of the Church with generous or grudging approval and yet ignore its present; we who are Catholics are much less concerned with its past than we are with its very satisfactory present as compared with the present of societies and institutions regarded as genuinely modern.

Let's take one instance as an example of what we mean. Time out of mind the charge has been uttered that churchmen have been violently addicted to persecution. That's something that hangs mist-like over the past. Shifting our eyes from the rather vague past to the very clear present, we find to our amazement that the crime of persecution is an entirely non-Catholic one. Whatever is true or false of the past, we who live in the present would have a much better chance of keeping our head on our shoulders or our civil liberties in our hands or the right of free conscience in our pockets under modern Catholic domination than under the domination of those who are the Church's most professional enemies.

WHO ARE THE PERSECUTORS?

Catholic southern Ireland is remarkably free from persecution. The cries "To hell with the Pope!" and "Down with Catholics!" are still heard in the streets of Protestant Belfast. You have a much better chance of speaking your political opinions in Catholic Belgium than you have in Nazi Germany. You can practice Lutheranism or Shintoism or Holy Rollerism in Catholic Argentina and live to tell the tale; you can't practice the Catholic faith under an anti-Catholic Mexican Government without running the risk of looking down the shining barrels of levelled rifles.

American cities like Chicago or New York, with a predominantly Catholic population, permit Communist parades to march the streets and Soviet-loving agitators to take to their soap boxes in tax-supported public parks. Try if you have a taste for martyrdom, preaching Jesus Christ in the Red Square of Moscow. The Catholic party in Spain came into power as the result of a complete revulsion against the ruthless murder and arson that marked the savage interregnum of Spanish radicals and anti-Catholics. And historians still write with a shudder about the horrible days of obscenity, death, and tyranny when liberal, God-hating Bela Khun gripped the power that had slipped from the hands

of the exiled and fairly tolerant Hapsburgs.

No. We are safe for the time in leaving the historic Church to the historian and the theologian. The Church of the present is the Church that claims attention and consideration, for under that Church must the present believer live.

ALIVE AND ALERT.

That Church is certainly not dead. In fact it is more than ever alive. And it is aggressively and yet patiently concerned with the problems and needs of the modern man. It manifests an irrepressible vitality. It concerns itself with the dreams and aspirations, the needs and developments of the man of the present age.

High on the list of modern virtues, the modern man would, we feel, list self-criticism. Candour, a frank facing of one's own limitations and need for improvement, is a prized modern quality of mind and soul. Now, I suppose it would occur to the modern to look for self-criticism almost anywhere else in the world than in the Church. That is just an instance of wrong direction.

SELF-CRITICAL.

For no Protestant or unbeliever who sticks to truth and disdains the lie has ever criticised the human defects of the Church as scathingly as Catholics have done and do. Quite reasonably and with a decent family pride Catholics do not air soiled linen before the shocked eyes and offended nostrils of the neighbours. But in the social gatherings that bring priests together you could hear frank and honest criticism that would amaze the non-Catholic listener. Laymen who really love the Church will, just because of their love for it, be outspoken and almost savage in their criticism of human defects that hold back the Church's progress.

Diocesan synods and provincial meetings of bishops, following immemorial tradition, lay frankly upon the council table the faults and shortcomings of churchmen and laity, face problems within the Church, and, with a ruthlessness that old Savonarola would admire, speak sharp truth and cut skilfully at what they regard as abuses. The atmosphere that surrounds gatherings of priests and bishops is not lush with complacent self-congratulation, but crisp and biting with self-criticism and discontent with things which are wrong, slack, inadequate or out of line.

The Catholic, of course, distinguishes clearly between the divine elements that make up the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church, and the dirt and squalor that may soil it. He knows it can be struck with wounds that may need the cauterising acid or the biting action of the surgeon's scalpel; it may even show disturbing growths and lose gangrened members. In this, however, he differs from the Protestant of Reformation days. In how little, by the way, the Protestant of the time of Luther and Henry of England and Calvin and Knox agree with the Protestant of Parks Cadman and Fosdick and the Y.M.C.A.

REFORMING TO KILL

Those ruthless old rebels against the Church sought to remove the dirt and tumours and heal the wounds by pulling the flesh away from the divine Body. They jerked away great pieces that, without the divine Body to sustain them, have remained to this day limp, amorphous masses, creedless and formless, without solidity or the Dower of thought or motion. The Council of Trent, setting the standard for the Church from its own day to ours, cut away the sins and evils, the excretions and filth, but was not so stupid as to think one healed flesh by stripping it from the bone or cured bleeding wounds by tearing them from their connection with the heart.

The Church and its members study and, with scholarly criticism, analyse even divine revealed truth. In a critical desire for self-improvement, they are constantly searching out that particular truth which fits this particular age; that particular doctrine which solves this individual and pressing need. The Church is changeless, but its use of truth and its application of that truth to changing life is, a magnificent study.

SEEN FROM OUTSIDE.

Most comment upon the Church from those outside it is, as we have indicated, almost humorously wrong. Even Catholics who give up their faith seem to lose their grasp on what the Church actually believes and does. Naturally, then, the best intentioned people muffle Catholic facts and teachings and principles and viewpoints sadly. They miss

those very things which the Catholic knows to be keynote and essential.

The reason for this is that they are dealing with an elaborate and exquisitely jointed system of thought and practice. From outside the Church almost everything in it is seen out of focus. The Church was never meant by its divine Founder to be viewed from a distance and from beyond high walls. It was meant to be seen as part of oneself, with a kind of loving intimacy. Most of all, it was never intended merely to be observed, for it was given to humanity by Jesus Christ to be lived.

DISCONTENTED

The non-Catholic taking up some slight interest in things Catholic is a little like a man with a smattering of mathematics who would happen to drop in on a class conducted by Einstein. His reports on the class later on would hardly be accurate, and would certainly not be Einstein.

Naturally, then, the non-Catholic misses even so important a point as the fact that the Church is extremely modern. And we can begin to study its modernity in its agreement with the most surprising state of mind of the most modern of men. Both the modern and the most conservative of Catholics have a great and almost passionate discontent with things as they are.

Does it seem odd that the Church should agree heartily and quite enthusiastically with the modern thinker who rails against the world as it is? Does it seem incongruous that the Catholic should not approve when the modern thinker protests that this is a most unsatisfactory world?

The modern brags of his divine discontent. Divine discontent is almost a chronic state of mind within the Catholic Church. In fact, no logical Catholic was ever otherwise than at odds with things as they are.

LEADING TO DESPAIR.

We hardly need to pause on the widespread and loudly announced discontent that is characteristic of modern thinkers. At the basis of most really popular philosophies and codes of living is a deep-rooted dissatisfaction. Discontent has become something like a modern cultus, creed, and code. From the ancient philosopher, shouted down by all Catholic thinkers, who set himself to prove that this is the best of all possible worlds, the cry is far to the clamorous chorus which today sings of the world's inadequacy, mismanagement, and general cussedness.

The important and prevailing schools of thought are rooted in discontent. Socialism and its blood-brother Communism begin with the supposition that the whole economic order is wrong and that men must hate, not only the world-wide injustices, but all men not of their class in society. Medicine, and political science labour to reconstruct imperfect bodies, human and politic. Social reform demands constant change and improvement. Evolution is a dogma that supposes that the past was imperfect and that we move through painful adjustments toward a slowly bettering world. Modern attire sings the blues over every form of human relationship from marriage and the home to big business, government, and international relationships. The human mind is blown about on the sighs for a golden age that has never been and in all probability never will be.

Two schools of fundamental philosophy have evolved from this wide modern dissatisfaction and discontent: One group sees the world as slowly evolving toward better forms in men and society. The second group sees no hope at all as civilization whirls down the greased slide, perhaps of its own fashioning and greasing, toward collapse and the end of all. Certainly, even in your surface reading, you have not failed to note the persistent prophecies of ruin.

AGREED.

The Catholic Church meets this modern dissatisfaction with man, his societies, his struggles and strivings, and, up to a certain point, concedes that there is just reason for discontent. The world is not a completely satisfactory place. Most emphatically it is not. Man is often less the world's master than the world's uniquely discontented animal. Everything human has about it an impermanence that should be alarming if it were not rather a symbol and a sign. The very best efforts of the very best men do not serve to make men happy nor even reasonably contented. Far from being a completely satisfactory world, the world is so definitely unsatisfactory that it cannot possibly be the ultimate creation intended by a wise and good God to content the heart and mind of the supreme creatures who dwell in it.

Sagely the Church nods its head in agreement with the man of modern discontent. Indeed this is an unsatisfactory world. But when the modern man cries "Then let us despair," the Church replies "That is not the answer." And it parts company with the modern in his discontent and regretfully watches him slink off to hug his gloom and wallow in his pessimism. For the Church shrewdly argues that so unsatisfactory and unsatisfying a world cries aloud for some other world to complete it and to complement it with a satisfaction and adequacy surely not found in the present scheme of things.

THE ARGUMENT FROM DISGUST.

Man is a discontented animal. Most heartily the Church agrees with the modern in admitting this. But, it argues, that proves conclusively that man is not a mere animal. The animals made for earth, the cow and the dog and the sheep upon the hill, are notably content and satisfied. They belong upon earth. But man is not content either with the throne room of the palace or the exact focal point of the world's applause or the top of a mountain of gold or the central power in a network of radiating lines of influence. Man clearly belongs elsewhere. His discontent cries aloud for a life to complete this life, for a happiness to make amends for the lacks and loneliness, the failures and collapses, the bitterness of mistakes and the ashy flavour of glory that poison the life he leads.

The Church is modern enough to follow the modern thinker in his dissatisfaction with things as they are. It will not follow him into his despair, for it keeps its clear vision of a world for which this world is the proving ground, and of a life which the Maker of all life must, in justice and mercy, have intended to be finally satisfying.

TOLERANCE.

High on the list of virtues which the modern man admires is tolerance. He boasts that his mind is large enough for all truth and that his manners are suave enough to make him polite to any line of conduct not acutely destructive of general peace.

However, we note regretfully in passing that, where the Church is concerned, the tolerance of the modern seems to come a cropper. Besides, modern tolerance seems to have as its shady companion that ugly figure known as persecution.

Modern tolerance was probably born in the French Revolution to the thud of the falling guillotine blade. Liberalism in France and Portugal drove monks and nuns out of their land, and the recent brief regime of the liberals in Spain taught us bloody lessons in how illiberal liberalism could be. Communism boasts of a liberalism, and exemplifies it in a savage dictatorship, the world's most annoying and terrifying spy system, concentration camps, and death for all who claim the liberty to disagree. Paganism has been reborn in Germany to cries of "Down with the Jews" and crushing of all political opposition and an attempted crushing of all creeds save that of the state. Mexican liberals have marched to power to the rattle of gunfire turned, not upon armed enemies, but upon priests and laymen who thought that Christ the King had still some rights in His world. Many a man has grown to fear liberalism and professed tolerance because of the suggestion of congested prisons, the suppression of all opposition by thought or party, and a busy firing squad.

SEEING BOTH SIDES.

However, we strayed from the first point intended. Anyone who knows both types of students and scholars will find the Catholic far more tolerant of the doctrines and teachings of his opponents than his opponents are of those which the Catholic holds. In fact, if tolerance is largely a matter of trying to understand the views and opinions of others and the reasons why they hold these views and opinions, tolerance may properly be said to exist only in the Catholic Church today. Intellectual tolerance is largely a Catholic monopoly. Let's see how this can possibly be.

The Catholic priest and the educated Catholic layman are given, during the course of their education, a complete and systematic course in science, philosophy, and theology. They early discover that the Church has been remarkably absorbent. It has, with discerning eye, taken into its educational system practically all that was good and sound in the culture of each age. How Aristotle and Plato were wedded to Catholic thought is traditional. Equally traditional is the absorption of Mohammedan science by Catholic scholars. The classics of ancient Rome remained for centuries in the keeping of Christian Rome. The revived Latin and Greek learning of the Renaissance was welcomed by churchmen and by Catholic scholars. The progress of art was under Catholic patronage.

OPEN-MINDED.

With a continuance of the same policy, the Catholic student is presented with the best of modern thought and scientific discovery in a course that is essentially the same as that of any other student. What the patient fact-hunting of science has discovered and the literature of the age has created, the priest in training and the catholic layman in his courses are taught and expected to know.

The Catholic student does not stop with what of truth has been discovered and proved. He is given a philosophy that is different from that presented to the average non-Catholic. While even the well-instructed philosophical student in non-Catholic universities finds scholastic philosophy relegated by his classes to a few lines or brief passages, and hence goes through life almost entirely ignorant of its method of approaching truth and marshalling the universe into a logical and orderly array, the Catholic student in seminary and, in measure, in Catholic college and university, is required to pay careful consideration to other philosophies than his own.

FAIR TO FOES.

Before each thesis the opinions and teaching of those who have held and hold differently are fairly stated, explained, and their main arguments presented. The Catholic student grows familiar with Descartes and Kant and Spinoza and Bergson. These men are permitted to explain their theories to him and to argue against the scholastic philosophy which he is being taught. If he is studying the freedom of the will, those who disbelieve in its freedom are allowed to give their reasons. If he is considering the possibility of human immortality, he first sees the arguments of those who oppose immortality. Even when he turns the light of reason upon the existence of God, the conflicting but insistent voices of the atheists are permitted to urge their difficulties against the existence of a Deity.

As a result, the Catholic student of scholastic philosophy comes out of his course with a fair knowledge of other philosophies. The students of other philosophies, with surprising intolerance, dismiss scholastic philosophy with misstatement, stale sneers, and studied neglect.

FAIRNESS NOT RETURNED.

The ignorance of even thinking men about what the Catholic Church teaches is to most educated Catholics the occasion of mingled alarm and amusement. It is certainly no high sign of tolerance. The non-Catholic educated world today is quite arrogantly proud of its lack of acquaintance with Catholic doctrine and practice. One reads the same old stock misstatements and misinterpretations of Catholic teaching, the same jibes: "The adoration of Mary," "The end justifies the means," "Catholic opposition to free institutions," "The conflict of Church and State," "The war between religion and science," "Superstitious credulities," "The Church's concentration on the next world to the neglect of this." And one reads them over and over until one doubts that anyone ever takes the trouble to read other than stale, third-hand rehashes of what enemies have falsely uttered in ignorance and slander. Seldom, indeed, do you meet a non-Catholic who has made the effort to reach any first-hand or important Catholic source of information about the Church. No love of decent tolerance drives the average or even the better trained non-Catholic to Catholic libraries or scholars.

Very different is the intellectual tolerance demanded of a Catholic scholar. A priest finishing his seminary course has learned more of what Luther taught than is known by many a Lutheran minister. He has gone quite thoroughly into Mrs. Eddy's doctrines. He knows a deal more about Calvin than do most Presbyterians, who would be shocked if they found out what that stern old hater of humanity and joy really taught.

ALL SIDES.

The priest in training has faced the difficulties urged by modern criticism against the Bible. He has gone quite thoroughly into the recent attacks on supernaturalism which slump together under the convenient name of Modernism. He has met Renan and Strauss and Harnack, discussed the substance of Fraser's "The Golden Bough," heard Nietzsche's reasons for rejecting Christianity, studied the symbolism of Tyrrell and Loisy, carefully investigated, not merely the scientific data, but the ethical and religious implications of the dogma of evolution, and met the current thought of Chicago University's untheological seminary and the religious utterances from Riverside's Baptist Church.

The Catholic scholar knows a deal about all the religions that since the days of the Gnostics have risen to claim attention. You will find that in the past and today the adherents of these religions knew and know less than nothing about the Catholic Church, for the exasperating reason that what they know was and is uniformly incorrect. The Catholic scholar pays careful attention to the findings of science. Scientists, by a kind of common consent, pay no attention to the findings of Catholic scholarship.

GHOSTS ARE NOT SHOT.

In fact, as we have indicated, intellectual tolerance in, the sense of trying to find out what the other chap holds is a distinctly Catholic virtue. If tolerance is a modern virtue, Catholics rarely find it in others.

While we are on the subject of tolerance, may we indicate that the intense modern aliveness of the Catholic Church is perhaps in no way more clearly indicated than in the intolerance of the repressive steps that are taken against it today ? Today, not only in Mexico and Russia but in every Communistic and Atheistic meeting in the world, the Church is paid the compliment of being regarded as vigourously alive. One does not hang a corpse nor shoot a ghost nor write violent propaganda against the dead nor legislate against the rights of those who lie in snug or dishonoured graves. Ammunition, in the form of bullets or propaganda or persecuting laws, is not wasted on the dead.

Two factors that indicate the modernness of the Catholic Church can be mentioned only in passing. One is the number of thoughtful, influential men and women who have come into the Church during the past decade. That they were often men and women of letters is an important indication that the Church reaches the thinkers. The other is the recurrence of attacks upon the Church in the so-called "class" magazines and journals. If a magazine editor must know anything, he must know a live and topical subject. The editors of all our better-circulation magazines have thought the Church just that sort of subject.

FOUR RIVALS

Four rivals of the Catholic Church claim the serious attention of the modern man or woman. A brief comparative study may serve to emphasise the timeliness of the Catholic Church. The four rivals are: Judaism, Protestantism in any of its countless forms, the Eastern philosophies and religions, and agnosticism or doubt.

Judaism is one of the unfailing mysteries of human history. But today, except in its rapidly fading orthodox form, Judaism is not a religion at all. Nor is it, in its still religious side of orthodoxy, even slightly interested in drawing non-Jews to its beliefs.

Time was when Judaism was a mighty religion that stood for a great faith and a mighty hope and a superb liturgy and ritual. All that is gone. One finds in the writings of the modern Jews little sign of belief in the old personal God who brooded over their nation. The ancient hope of a Messiah has almost disappeared. The temple which was the centre of Jewish life has not existed for centuries, nor has the ancient priesthood that was entrusted with the worship of the mighty Jevah. Temple and priesthood vanished, significantly enough, at precisely the time when Christianity came into being. Christians have found a definite connection between these facts. Jews must attribute the loss of their essential religious faith and cult to mere coincidence.

STRIPPED OF VITALITY

To a man who studies Judaism, either of two explanations is possible: Judaism was a complete religion in itself; or, Judaism was a religion that led toward something that would complete and perfect it and give it its final significance. The latter was the ancient Jewish belief expressed in the hope of a Messiah who would fulfill the Law and bring Judaism to its peak. It can hardly be a complete religion when it has lost all the essentials of that religion. and has substituted instead a national unity and loyalty.

Christianity claims and asserts it can prove that all that Judaism had hoped for and expected came to pass when Jesus Christ entered the world. Christianity was merely the fulfilment of Jewish hopes and prophetic beliefs and foreshadowings. Because the mass of the Jews did not accept Christianity, or rather Jesus Christ, their own Messiah, temple and priesthood and faith and hope disappeared. They had to disappear, for the thing to which they led, the Person for whom they prepared had come and carried out His mission. Because they did not accept Him, Judaism

became a religion stripped of all that makes a religion important and vital, and a nation unique in this that it has no common tongue, no homeland, no law, no government.

LONG CENTURIES LATE.

There is just one fundamental trouble with Protestantism, beyond which we need not look. It arrived sixteen hundred years too late. In the case of Christian Science it was a matter of being some eighteen hundred years late.

If, by parallel, a college starting up in Virginia in, let's say, the year 1926, should claim that George Washington was its founder, everyone would laugh. Yet Protestantism, starting between 1520 and 1600 has the astounding temerity to claim Jesus Christ for its founder though He finished His work fifteen centuries before that time. And Christian Science, which never saw Christ and which learned its science from a distinctly unpleasant old lady, is, when it claims Christ as its author, asking us to lay aside less our judgment and historical perspective than our sense of humour.

BUILDING ON NEGATIVES.

When Protestantism appeals to the modern man, he is wise to roll its very name thoughtfully on his tongue. Will the modern man, definitely aggressive and hopefully constructive, be satisfied with a protest? A negative is weak mental or spiritual food. And while Protestantism of the present is probably the most-astounding medley of badly digested, inaccurately explained, constantly fluent, lightly held and widely contested teachings, it retains one firm doctrine, which is not a doctrine but a cry of alarm. It maintains that the Catholic Church is wrong and that Protestantism must protest in organised fashion against it. Protestantism, by an uncomfortable paradox, demands the existence of the Catholic Church in order to exist itself. If the Catholic Church ceased to be, Protestantism would have no reason for protest and its name and its chief mission would end. If Protestantism, however, were to drop into oblivion tomorrow, the Catholic Church would scarcely note its disappearance any more than it noticed the disappearance of Nestorians and Arians and Albigenses.

POOR INDIA.

The simple answer to Hinduism, most representative of Eastern philosophies, is a very concrete one: India. The glaring fact of India, land ruled by Hindu thought and religion, is enough to discourage any man who does not mistake poetry for reality, and the dreams of misty thinkers for life lived in accord with those dreams. India itself, India with its superstitions and tyrannies, its millions of outcast untouchables contrasting with its few extravagant, incredible despots, its mad swirling of creeds and cults and idol-crowded temples, with Animals worshipped with divine honours, and child marriage and female slavery, is all the answer one needs for the Yogis and mystic's who have offered Hinduism to our modern world.

THERE'S DOUBT.

When the Catholic Church is rejected as being out of date, really one only thing is offered by most men as a substitute.

That one thing is agnosticism or doubt. Let it be clearly understood that no one rejects the Catholic Church because of proved scientific data. No instance of proved premises in any science has ever seriously harmed the position of the Church. The discovery and application of electricity, the advance of modern medicine, the opening of the secret archives of history and the prying into the buried tombs of the ages, modern psychology and checked-up experiments, the progress of astronomy and physics and mathematics, have never brought forward a single fact that has made the Church wince or grow uncomfortable. What has happened is that men, from the proved, data, have drawn a long bow, formulated theories which were not in any sense proved, and with these attacked the Church.

For example, to take the one most frequently quoted, the facts of species evolving through the ages, of age succeeding age with new forms of life coming out of the old, may be true. The conclusions: "Therefore God is not needed to create the world," "The Bible is wrong," and "Man is not the son of God but a creature of chance," are baseless, false, against the facts, and do not in the slightest way touch the Church's position.

UNDIGNIFIED.

As a religion or a philosophy of life science has nothing to offer a man. On all the really important things it must say, "I do not know." To all the vital questions, "Where did I come from?" "Why am I here?" "Where am I going?" it can only shrug its shoulders and confess a total ignorance. It must cling to its own favourite name, agnosticism, which means the state of not knowing.

Now, if he should want to describe agnosticism or scientific doubt by a single adjective, we should say that it is undignified. It is undignified to live without knowing any of the essential things that surround a man and his destiny. It is undignified to cling to a theory of life that explains nothing important about life.

Because doubt is undignified and because it is humiliating to admit that one knows nothing of oneself, agnosticism and scientific doubt have gone a step further in the lack of dignity. They have claimed the allegiance of mankind for some of the most astounding ugly and indecent beliefs. We need not re-enumerate them. We need only be reminded that in the philosophy of certain groups of doubting scientists they have asked us to believe: that the universe is empty of any controlling force; that this is a disorderly and lawless world (holding this in face of the universal law of nature); that man is a purposeless accident, without destiny or dignity; that we have no free will by which to rise above our heredity and surroundings; that human immortality is a hoax played on the whole of mankind by some cruel but unknown jester; that in the cold, uninterested, purposeless cosmos we play a witless part, with no one to watch or care, only to end as an obscure fate sweeps us back into the chemical dissolution of the grave.

FED WITH DOUBT.

None of these theories has been proved or can be proved. But quite aside from that, they are basically undignified. They are hopeless, despairful, cynical, cruel. They explain why so many men who give them serious thought become as pessimistic as Voltaire was in his day or Frederick of Prussia; as Anatole France was or Nietzsche or Shaw; as Aldous Huxley is or Dreiser or H. G. Wells or even the great Einstein.

No man can live happily if his mind is torn with doubt. He cannot face life if life has neither purpose nor dignity nor meaning. He cannot despise himself and his race and yet live splendidly. The data and findings of science are magnificent and have done nothing to impair the position of the Catholic Church but have done much, in many cases, to strengthen it. The philosophy that has been concocted by careless thinkers and changed every decade offers man neither hope nor dignity.

THE CLAIMS OF BEAUTY.

Even the slightest acquaintance with the Church makes clear one of its important claims to the attention of modern men and women. Beyond all other faiths or doubts it is uniformly beautiful. We need not refer now to the unquestioned beauty of Catholic architecture or the unflagging interest of the Church in music and painting and sculpture. We need not even call attention to the glory of the Catholic ritual as contrasted with the drab ugliness which Protestantism deliberately donned in Reformation days and has for four centuries grimly worn.

The beauty of the Church is a deeper, richer thing. Any Catholic who knows his faith can tell you of that beauty: the beauty of the Eucharist with all its lovely connotations; the beauty that links itself with the poetic devotion to the Sacred Heart; the beauty of God's Mother, less as she looks down from canvas and shrines than as she looks down in motherhood upon humanity.

In one sweeping challenge we can state what the educated Catholic knows about the beauty of his Church: Search as you will, you cannot find a single doctrine or dogma taught by the Catholic Church which is not, if properly understood, dignified and beautiful. There is no single Catholic dogma toward which the human heart fails to reach out gladly if the human mind has honestly grasped it.

ALL FAIR.

From the significance of the red lamp that indicates before the tabernacle the watchful presence of love's divine Prisoner, to the belief in a father Providence that guides the stars and shapes the courses of men, every Catholic doctrine, quite independently of its truth, is exquisite and appealing.

The caricatures, of Catholic truth with which non-Catholics have been deceived are uniformly ugly and repulsive things. What the Church really teaches appeals to the modern love of beauty. Even the doctrine of hell is really merely the reverse side of the doctrine of eternal happiness, and the possibility of sin is the shadowy side of the possibility of courage and martyrdom and sainthood.

We let the challenge stand. Perhaps it may stimulate someone to accept it. If anyone does, we know that he will admit, after his honest study is completed, that the challenge in no way overstates the fact that the Church teaches on what is beautiful, consoling, stimulating to the human mind, refreshing to the human heart, redounding to the honour God and to the dignity and solace of the race of men.

THE SOURCE BOOK FOR ALL.

Perhaps the Catholic finds nothing more indicative of the extreme timeliness of the Church than the way in which all other creeds use it as the quarry from which they dig the material with which they build their latest and of-the-moment structures. From the Catholic Church Protestantism took the Bible on which it is still founded, and borrowed every one of the doctrines of Protestantism which have withstood the corroding of time.

Christian Science stresses the healing of the body as the Catholic Church has done at the many shrines of its miracles, notably Lourdes and Loreto and St. Anne of Beaupre today. Christian Science teaches a decidedly silly pantheism (we can never forget that in humourless fashion Mrs. Eddy proclaimed that our livers were God). The Catholic Church gives us the true union of God and men in Holy Communion and the beautiful assimilation of men to the divinity (without the destruction of their personality and individuality) in the Mystical Body of Christ.

Communism cries aloud the old Catholic doctrine of the brotherhood of man, but dares not go nearly as far as the Church has gone. For while Communism's brotherhood is limited to those of its dominant class and party, the Church demands brotherhood for all men and classes and races and colours.

COPYING.

A casual reading of modern thinkers brings one face to face with the desire for the "immanence of God." If the term is unfamiliar, the reader may skip it. If it is familiar, he must be reminded that the Catholic Church holds the true immanence of God, the dwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, in the souls of those who have accepted Him. in Confirmation.

Almost belatedly we find the modern man and woman keenly alert to social justice, in a programme that has not, in the main, dared to go as far along the path of social reform and economic reconstruction as Leo XIII indicated over forty years ago.

Pacifism is a modern enthusiasm. The Church, from the beginning/ when it was born to the recurring phrase of its Founder, "Peace be with you," has preached and practised peace. Indeed, in its supernationalism, its binding of men together in the common brotherhood of the faith and a union. under the leadership of Christ the King, is the only possible basis for any effective League of Nations or any successful working together of the races and the nations.

FROM CATHOLIC SOURCES.

Modern education found the Church already a teacher in every type of school, from that for the smallest youngsters to successful universities. Modern hospitals derive from that mother of hospitals, the Catholic Church, which first gave the, concept of a merciful care of the sick to an astonished world. It could not do otherwise and still follow in the footsteps of the Divine Physician.

We recall with considerable interest that modern democratic principles were outlined by Catholic philosophers long before the American Revolution and that Suarez and Bellarmine considerably antedated Jefferson, Franklin, and the French revolutionists and democrats.

Today, as Protestantism wanes at home, it shows an increasing missionary zeal abroad. But wherever it arrives, it finds the Catholic missionary already in the field. "Go teach all nations," spoken to the Church and obeyed by the Church from the start, was a command that Protestantism recognised so late that it everywhere merely follows in the footsteps of the Catholic priest and nun.

BRAVE OR COWARDLY?

It will depend entirely upon how you regard the modern man or woman whether you consider this next quality of the Church as appealing " or not. Most of us who love our fellow men would like to think it could prove to be a kind of inspiring challenge. Many of our contemporaries who think slightly of mankind in general and of our own rather soft age in particular would find it discouraging.

For the Church is undoubtedly difficult. It has never pretended for a moment that faith is easy. Much less does it claim that practice is simple. Certainly the Founder of Christianity trod no easy and smooth path. Would He be to this day the admiration even of the man without faith had He been, like the men of His own day whom He honestly condemned, a man clad in purple and fine linen and feasting sumptuously every day? Christ set for humanity a difficult path. But so did every leader who ever lifted humanity to higher level in whatever line of achievement.

The Church would plainly not be the Church of Christ if it were inviting its members down easy slopes and along carpeted ways. You cannot follow a crucified God without occasionally finding blood on your feet. You cannot raise yourself or your contemporaries without struggle and effort and the mastery of difficulties.

NOT FOR WEAKLINGS.

The Church has never claimed to be an institution for the weakling nor the teacher of practices that can be mattered by the coward. Patiently and gently the Church mothers the weak and tempted and lifts the fallen to their feet. But its inspiring challenge is to those with high ideals and the courage to realise that high ideals are attained only by high and difficult adventuring.

Is the modern man afraid of difficulties? His detractors say he is. Then perhaps the Church would not appeal to him. But if the modern man who conquers the sky in heroic achievements is also willing to embark on the romantic adventure of scaling heaven itself; if the modern athlete, who likes a contest that tests his skill and endurance, wants to enter the race for which St. Paul pointed out the prize as eternal life; if unselfishness has any appeal and the service of one's neighbour is still an inspiring vocation; if, whether militarist or pacifist, one still feels the urge to battle nobly and heroically for justice and truth and the advancement of the race and the triumph of God's kingdom, then the Church has first claim upon the modern man's allegiance.

THE DIFFICULT CHRIST.

Christ had the sad experience of living among weaklings who found His doctrines hard and walked no more with Him. The Church has had the same distressing experience. There are millions today who resist the appeal of the Church, not because they have investigated its claims or fathomed its teachings or appraised its moral practices, but because they quickly sense that the Church expects of its members heroism. And they draw back from the necessity of fighting their lower natures, cultivating a sinless heart, forgiving enemies, leading careers of startling honesty, training themselves to unselfishness, living for God and neighbour rather than for self.

They are modern, but they are no credit, these moderns, to our age. For purity can never be out of date, and service of one's fellows is, in any age, essential; and honesty and loyalty and truth cannot be alien to any era. These things are hard, and the Church, following the teachings of Christ, demands them. It demands, as He did, faith, a spirit of sacrifice, love of fellow man, prayer, a humility of heart that is yet proud enough to aspire to the sonship of God. And never, whatever the age, can these things be obsolete or out of date.

BOTH OUT OF DATE.

The same people who call the Church out of date find Christ out of date, too. Yet He has proved to be the one person who defies time. His contemporaries are misty figures. Even the great of a hundred years ago are shrouded in clouds and fog. Christ shines on the consciousness of the world with a vivid reality that never fades. And so does His Church.

To the men who did not care to know Christ, He appeared out of touch with the swift-moving armies, of Rome, the commercial enterprises of the Jewish temple, the complacent agnosticism of Athens, the quickly rising and collapsing religions that came out of the East. They died. He lived.

To those who do not care to study the Church, it appears out of touch with modern progress, with big business, with religious systems that are forgetting God and thinking of social service alone, with education that forgets all the essentials of a man's nature, with nationalism gone mad and science so engrossed with nature that it cannot see the Creator of nature. All these things, too, will pass. And Christ's Church will live.

Only the man who has knelt in the Church as God-with-us is lifted in the elevation of the Host, who has heard truth explained in such fashion that it co-ordinated and unified and made beautiful and dignified his last action and his greatest, who has felt the presence of God in His heart and the certainty of immortality in his soul and firmness of conviction in his mind, who has experienced the reassurance of a Father Who is God and a Mother who is Mary and an elder Brother Who is Christ the Lord, who has freely melted himself into the world-community which is the Mystical Body of the Saviour and seen all men in the brotherhood of a common faith and hope and love—only that man can tell you how perfectly the Church meets the needs and desires of the man of this day and age.

But it is infinitely worthwhile, no matter what the difficulties and the sacrifices involved, to experience and know all that.

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