

TRUTH'S THE THING.

A Catholic Viewpoint on Everyday Subjects

Daniel A. Lord, S.J.

I.

TRUTH'S THE THING.

The recent convert laid the book on my table.

"That," he said with frank enthusiasm, "is the most remarkable book I ever read in my life."

I picked up the book and glanced at it in surprise. It was one that I had lent him a week or so before; and though it was particularly suited to his needs, no one had ever regarded it as a masterpiece.

"It is a fine statement of Catholic principles," I agreed; "but it is not what I should call a great book. When it appeared from the publisher's press, not one secular critic in the world deigned to give it a line's notice. Don't you think that our litterateurs would sniff a bit at its style?"

"Style," he retorted with a gesture of dislike, "makes me sick and tired. I'm frankly fed up on it. There's no excuse for a man talking nonsense even if he talks it beautifully. No writer has a right to prove that two and two make five even if he does it with all the cleverness and brilliancy in the world. I'm tired of style, and I want a little truth for a change. That book hasn't a particularly attractive style, but it has truth, and it's a positive relief in this day of cleverness to find somebody who cares more for what he says than for the way he says it."

My friend paused long enough, for he was a well-read man, to tick off on his fingers the names of a dozen moderns who write beautifully about terrible subjects.

"Of course they have cleverness," he went on. "Of course they are brilliant. What's that got to do with it?"

"One gets a certain amount of fun out of watching skyrockets and Roman candles; but I've yet to hear of anyone holding a skyrocket to his heart when he was cold, or cooking his dinner over a bundle of Roman candles.

"One finds a lot of entertainment in the juggler who keeps five or six brass balls, a lamp or two, and a parasol in the air while he lies on his back twirling a barrel with his feet. But nobody on God's earth would go to a juggler for advice about his neuralgia, or about some doubt that was torturing his soul. Cleverness and brilliance are all right by way of entertainment, but they end right there.

"And to me all this modern cleverness is just skyrockets and Roman candles, beautiful cakes made of ornamental concrete, rare old wines filled with poison.

"What right has any man to trick out lies with beautiful writing? What right has he to pass off on me counterfeit coins, no matter how exquisite the design they bear?. And that to me is just what a clever style does when underneath is nothing but errors and untruth.

"In fact," he went on, warming to his subject, "if his style is clever, there is just that much less reason or excuse for the writer.

"A dull writer doesn't do any harm, no matter how wrong he may be or what sort of filth he may be teaching. But the same instinct that makes us watch skyrockets with popping eyes or stand gaping before the juggler keeps us spellbound before the writer who says brilliantly what he has to say. We are so dazzled by his fireworks that we overlook the fact that they smell suspiciously of fire and sulphur and brimstone. The balls he tosses fly so rapidly through the air that they look like gold, even if they are the commonest brass.

"I'm new enough in the Faith," he went on, "to be in love with truth for truth's sake. I've had my fill of style; I want substance for a while. Let the children of, the world stand gaping before Roman candles; I am interested in the eternal stars. I'll let them break their teeth on cement cake covered with intricate patterns in potassium cyanide; I have asked for bread and I'm tired of being handed a stone. Don't talk style to me. I want God's truth—and I'll get it, even if I have to crack through the rough covering of an ugly and repellent style."

II. GOD'S VIEWPOINT.

They were looking down from the tower of a new skyscraper at the streets below; tiny specks, infinitesimal particles of humanity, toy autos and trolleys, the indistinct sound of the crowds blurred by distance.

"How small that makes one feel!" said the believer, ruminatively.

"At least," said the pagan, "here we have something of the viewpoint of the gods upon humanity. The gods are so far away from the world that men, self-important, strutting through avenues of their own building, are just indistinguishable specks, dots in the illegible story of mankind. Their greatest buildings are houses in Lilliput.

"And if men scream in pain or shout in joy, if they pray the gods or curse them, it's all a jumbled, meaningless sound when it reaches the ears of the gods."

"Of the gods, perhaps," answered the believer, "not of God."

"Of God," retorted the pagan. "'God's in His heaven,' and from heaven how can He tell whether or not 'All's right with the world'?"

"Yes," he concluded; "if anyone had convinced himself that the gods (or God if you insist) know him or hear his prayers or can tell him from the rest of the mob in the streets, I would take him up on a tall building. 'You are God,' I would say. 'Now what is John Jones doing? Is Will Smith praising your majesty or blaspheming it?'"

"All of which," said the believer pityingly, "shows that you are a poor, benighted pagan."

"A pagan surely; but not poor nor benighted."

"A pagan and wretchedly poor and horribly benighted. God's in His heaven, right enough, but He's very much on His earth. If you have a picture in your mind of God leaning out of a cloud and looking down upon the earth through celestial binoculars, you are seeing utter nonsense.

"God is in the world, every least part of it. He is nearer to John Jones' heart than the blood that flows through it; He is so close to the lips of Will Smith that his faintest sigh of pain or his swiftly whispered prayer is breathed into God's pitying ear."

"Very beautiful, but—"

"He fills the city streets," the believer hurried on, "and through Him the crowds live and move and have their being. God is not an impersonal observer looking down from a balcony upon a play; He is closer to the play than the actors themselves. He is in every fibre of life, in every atom of man and nature."

"Like some great impersonal celestial ether," supplemented the pagan.

"Like a father who carries his child pressed to his heart. But God is an observer, too."

"Ah," said the pagan, "then you agree with me."

"But not from a skyscraper. He watches the world from the level of the tabernacle, just raised high enough above mankind so that He can see; just low enough so that men can reach up and touch Him."

A moment's silence, broken only by the faint hum of the crowd.

"Ah," said the pagan, "if that were only true!"

III. GOD AND THE ENGINEER.

The Broadway Limited pulled into the Pennsylvania Station on time to the second.

The nervous passenger glanced at her wrist watch and looked positively thwarted.

"I was sure we were going to be late," she murmured to her companion.

The brisk porter smiled cheerfully under his shower of silver (with a very occasional bill); the conductor swung out on the platform and watched the two hundred and more passengers pouring from the Pullmans; the brakeman rolled up his flag with finality and took a last look at his lanterns; and the passengers poured out on to the station platform bent toward their hotels, offices, homes and theatres.

The trip was over, the train had kept its schedule. And that was that.

Up in the cab of the locomotive the engineer took off his cap and mopped his sweaty face with a bandana. Under the cab window streamed the passengers whom he had brought, without a slip, to their destination. All through the

night he had sent the train crashing through the darkness, his eyes on the silver pathway of the rails, his hand, as it rested on the throttle, holding safety or destruction in his strong grasp.

The Limited had lost time when the blocks were set against him outside of Trenton, but he had made that up. A fool motorist had swept perilously across the track on the final stretch toward New York. The engineer reached for his brakes, which, thank heaven, he had not had to use.

Now he felt the gratification of knowing that he had brought his train in on the second.

He sat back for a few moments' relaxation. Not one of the passengers who hurried under the cab window looked up. Not one flung him a grateful "Thank you." They were in too much of a rush to reach their business or pleasure to give a thought to the man on whose sure skill and tireless nerves had depended the comfort of their trip and their very lives.

They simply took him for granted. He had brought the Limited in, but that was his job. He was so remote up there in his locomotive cab that it was easy to forget that their lives depended on his ceaseless care. So they hurried by and he gazed down from his window on bent heads which never lifted in a look of gratitude.

As I watched that engineer sitting quietly above the heedless passengers hurrying from his train, I thought of God—God who guides that limited train, the spinning earth, safely through space; God, upon whose watchful care depends the swift progress of our lives; God, who, if His unfailing hand for a moment slipped or His all-seeing eye for a moment left the pathway of our years, would send us crashing off into utter oblivion and eternal darkness.

But His hand does not fail nor His eye waver, and He guides our lives as He guides the schedules of planets and suns and solar systems safely to the goal.

We accept the fact of His guidance and forget Him who sits at the throttle of the universe. He brings the worlds safely through space; we take that for granted. It's His job. He guides our lives as far as we will let Him; that, too, we take quite for granted.

We pass under His window without a word of gratitude for the sure guidance that has kept us safe. We tip life's porters, thank life's conductors, God's creatures who have helped us on our journey.

We find it quite too easy to ignore God, the Engineer.

IV.

AND STILL HE REIGNS.

It is quite possible at high noon to shut one's eyes and say, "There is no such thing as the sun."

It is possible to stand on a cliff over the sea, turn one's back on the incoming tide, thrust fingers into one's ears, and say, "This earth of ours is a dry and barren desert and no water ever wets its shores."

In other words, one can deny anything by the simple process of shutting one's eyes and closing one's ears and keeping one's mind a blank.

So the modern atheist does. Like the idiot who rises at midnight to announce to the world that there is no light except the candle he has just lit, the atheist walks in the midst of a great world catastrophe, where the clouds of sin have come between God and His creatures, and cries out, "There is no God."

And all the while:

The order of the world, so perfect from the tiniest shell to sweeping planet, demands an Intellect vast enough to plan and order it all.

That mysterious thing called life, unexplained and unexplainable, demands a Supreme Life from which it can take its rise.

These free wills, so different from the brute matter we can analyse, catalogue, and predict, need a Supreme Will upon which they can be modelled.

The swift changes and fleetingness of everything one sees, flowing and shifting, varying yet indestructible, is impossible without some fixed, permanent, immovable Being upon Whom the changeable and changing world can depend.

The universal mind of mankind, even of the lowest type of savage, bends in acknowledgment of a Supreme Being. The instinctive heart of mankind longs for the perfect love and sympathy and care of a divinity.

Man's "incurably religious instinct" bends him on his knee before the Master of the universe.

The very atheist, in moments of need, cries out to a rejected divinity.

No man, however much he has hated God or scoffed at Him, has ever written one book that proves He doesn't exist.

Even the blind know that there is a sun. Even the deaf feel the roar of the sea.

Even the atheist knows in his heart there is a God.

V.

I BELIEVE IN GOD.

Sometimes we have wondered why it is so extremely difficult for us to argue with unbelievers on questions like the authority of the State, divorce, the rights of the individual, the prerogatives of the Church.

Then suddenly we find out that the people we are talking to have not even the fundamental agreement with us on the first statement of faith, "I believe in God."

For all the fact that mankind has always believed in God, for all the fact that no man has ever seriously attempted to prove there is no God, this modern age of strangely loose thinkers has reached the strangest conclusions on the subject of God.

Many of them have deliberately tried to argue themselves out of a belief in God. It takes a twisted course of logic even to approach this proposition, "There is no God." Others have simply substituted a vague impersonal world-force for the personal God of Christianity. Others look on humanity as God, or stand reverently before the universe as if it were divine.

There is such a thing as becoming too offhand in our attitude toward important truths, and we Catholics, who are accustomed to say, "I believe in God," must remember that there is nothing offhand in a statement like that. It is terribly important, terribly real, absolutely proved.

If there is a God, this whole world takes on a real significance and vast importance. If I have proved to myself, as the Church is ready to prove to us, that the fact of God can be established beyond doubt, my faith begins to take on a deeper and a fuller meaning.

So we can do well by spending just a little time on the phrase, "I believe in God." There is in it the study of a lifetime and the certainty of a happy eternity.

VI.

A REASONABLE FAITH.

It is almost silly to talk about the Bible unless you believe that there is a God Who could give us a Bible.

It is quite absurd to talk about Christ's teaching unless you know that the Gospels are historical books telling the real story of a very genuine man.

You cannot talk of God's word unless you're sure that there is a God to speak to you. You cannot follow Christ unless you know with certainty that there is a Christ to follow.

From the days when the first Christian apologists had to go out and argue with a clever, trained group of pagan philosophers, until the moment when dying St. Thomas laid aside his pen, the Church had carefully built faith upon reason, theology upon philosophy, its great body of teachings upon proved facts.

It asked of no man that he act on feeling or impulse or pretty sentiment. It expected him to know why he believed and to appreciate the great, impressive facts back of belief.

Then came the Protestant revolution and cut faith away from reason, made religion largely a matter of emotion, and, starting from a Book, tried to prove everything from printed pages instead of from history and science and philosophy as the preambles and preludes to faith.

It succeeded so well in cutting faith away from proofs that a young Protestant, a regular churchgoer and a careful, thoughtful student, said to me with astonishment: "I never dreamed that there was such a thing as a rational basis for faith. When I talked with my minister about my doubts, I got either of two answers: 'Read your Bible; it's all there'; or 'Wait until you are as old as I am, and you'll feel the need of religion then.' I never thought that religion could be

proved or should be proved.”

Just this strange divorce of religion from reason has made possible the fact that we find ministers, who do not think that God’s existence can be proved, worshipping God with their congregations on Sunday. We find men and women whose philosophical training has made them confident that they have no souls, going to church to save them.

But we are not concerned about others except in so far as facts like these may help us appreciate what we ourselves have been given.

We worship God and know that He speaks to us in the inspired Bible. But we know with St. Paul that the clear light of reason leads up directly to Him, and that, were all the books of the Bible to be destroyed and forgotten, we could still prove that God exists and watches over us.

We follow Christ with high-souled devotion, but we know that the Gospels that tell His story are accurate and authentic histories which, despite all the attacks made upon them, are the clearest and most surely proved documents in the world.

We accept the fact of miracles, but we know that miracles can happen; we prove that miracles are within the providence and power of God and are given to us for definite, reasonable purposes.

We labour to save our souls, but we turn to philosophy to find out whether we have souls, and what sort of souls they are, and whether they possess an immortality to make them worth saving.

We know that, even if God had never told us of heaven or hell, our conscience would speak conclusively of rewards and punishments following death, as it has spoken to the wildest and most savage of races.

Remember this: Though the Catholic Church is accused of stifling reason and setting up authority as all-powerful, the Catholic Church is the only religion in the world today that takes the stand that religion is a matter of mind as well as of will, that religious truths are provable, that even the highest and deepest mystery rests on some facts that our intellects can grasp and cling to satisfactorily.

VII.

THE COMPLIMENT OF A LIE.

As I laid the last nasty little book aside, I thought of a Swede I had known, a great muscular, brilliant chap, who became a convert because he read so many attacks on the Catholic Church.

“If it weren’t a pretty strong and vigorous organisation,” he had argued sagely, “people would not spend so much time attacking it, and the attacks would have taken effect long ago.”

This particularly nasty booklet, written by a former Catholic, was reeking of hatred and venom against the Church.

Yet, though the man thought that he was dealing a terrible blow to the Church, he really was showing its strength. For the book was the most astonishing mass of distortions, half-truths, twisted facts, misleading surmises, and flat lies that I had ever read.

The author twisted history to his own purpose with a devilish cleverness and piled together unrelated facts to build up a theory of his own invention.

Lies are bad, but half-truths are worse. One can answer a lie with a blow in the face; a half-truth cannot be answered with a volume.

Yet, as I say, the book proved, more clearly than a volume of Catholic defence would have proved, the strength of the Catholic position. Here was a brilliant man, with a broad background of history and literature, who, when he came to attack the Church, had to resort to lies and distortion of truth. To smash the truth of the Church he had to rely on untruth. To discredit its history he had to rewrite history and twist it into weird and incredible shapes.

The Catholic position, I felt, as I read, must be unassailable. Even the brilliant hater of the Church had no weapon against it except the weapon of lies, and though lies may for a moment seem to smother the white flame of truth, truth leaps through them and blazes as it grows stronger with the lies meant to smother it.

And sometimes one reads in a self-betraying sneer the dominant motive that the author would like to hide.

“This man,” wrote the author, referring to a great saint and leader of the Catholic Church; “drew his inspiration from a crucifix. I draw mine from a pipe and glass of beer or port. The effect is precisely the same.”

Enemies who write like that do the Church a positive service.

VIII.

HE NEVER KNEW WHAT HE LOST.

He was a really clever fellow, amusing, good-looking, still with the freshness of youth.

We talked of a dozen different things that indicated his breadth of interest and his excellent taste. Then he said:

“I used to be a Catholic, but I gave that up when I was about eighteen.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Because,” he answered with a smile that he thought might salve my possibly injured feelings, “I found I could not believe what the Catholic Church taught. I had read too much, you see, on the other side.”

We talked along, and it wasn't many moments before I found that he knew almost nothing about the Church he had left. He had given up a faith that he had never known.

His Catholic education had ended when he made his First Communion. He had gone to Mass because it was a family practice; but he never had the slightest idea what the Mass really meant. His reading, from the time he was a boy, had been books that attacked the Church; we scraped around in his memory, but he could not remember a single book that he had read defending it.

Sad, I thought, terribly sad. Saddest because he did not know what he had lost.

I remember, as a sort of parallel case, a friend who had been given some stock in a newly formed company as payment for a bad debt. He let the stock lie in his safe for a month or so and then one day sold it when its market value was almost zero: His partner advised him against letting it go, but he shrugged his shoulders and sold it to buy what proved to be worthless stock. Later a few shares of the stock which he had let slip through his fingers would have made him comfortably rich. He did not know what he had, and so he let it go thoughtlessly and without regret. Regret came later.

To my mind, the used-to-be Catholic had been given by God and his parents a marvellous gift, something that would make him comfortably rich in life and fabulously rich in eternity. But he had no sense of its value, and he let it go. Someone, we may be sure, warned him that the gift was of priceless value, but he shrugged his shoulders and exchanged his faith for worthless doubt. Unfortunately, he does not know the regret of the man who sold the precious stock. He will with time, more surely with eternity.

One cannot be quite sure whether it is more stupid or more unfair.

If anyone brought serious charges against a man's mother or father, his instinct, before he had even investigated the charges, would be to deny them flatly. They just could not be true. Yet when anyone, clever or stupid, learned or ignorant, brings charges against the Church, the instinct is often to feel that perhaps the charges may be true.

Fair-minded men do not act like that. Men with even ordinary prudence and sound judgment do not do that sort of thing. Certainly, if one were not sure whether the stone he held in his hand was a diamond or paste, he would not throw it into the gutter because some chance passer-by looked at it, envied it, and scoffed at it as a fake.

So my used-to-be Catholic, though he knew nothing of what the Church really taught, rejected its teachings, Without ever listening to the arguments that prove its position, he accepted the arguments of those who hate it and attack it. He had thrown away his diamond without examining it.

If faith were a valueless thing, this strange obliquity would not much matter. The stock my friend had thrown away might be replaced with other stock which could make him rich. The faith which the former Catholic has thrown away cannot be replaced with anything that will give peace of mind or the assurance of a happy .eternity.

No man who really knows his faith loses it. No man who has studied the Catholic Church leaves it. Only the one who does not know what he is losing flings it away.

The sad part is that some day he will come to know his loss.

IX.

THANKS TO THE ENEMY.

I laid the book aside with a gesture almost of despair. It was a fierce and frank attack on religion, thinly disguised as an attack on one particular minister.

The author, a notorious hater of all things Christian, had painted his Protestant minister as an obscene hypocrite

and crudely ignorant. But his inference was that this was a typical representative of the ministry.

I knew the book to be untrue, unfair, yet gripping, and written with an artist's skill.

No doubt about it, the novel would do vast harm; for hundreds of thousands would read it, and of these thousands some would feel a growing distrust in their hearts for the ministers whom they had believed sincere, honourable men, and thousands of others would be persuaded that all religion is propped up by insincerity or used as a cloak for deceit and immorality.

A few days later a Catholic friend was the occasion of my meeting his non-Catholic business partner. The partner was a college man, a distinct success in his profession, and one whom I found keenly interested and logical.

But he confessed, as we talked, a vague groping for religion.

"I had a religious home," he said, "but college killed religion for me. I was taught to regard it as fetish worship, and to think of the supernatural as an improbable myth. I thought that I was through with religion forever; yet with every year I feel more and more deeply that something is missing from my life.

"I am not afraid to die, but I cannot believe that we are just butterflies in the sun, fluttering about for a few hours and then dying and rotting on the ground. I did not know what I needed, but I knew I did need something.

"Then I read that novel." He mentioned the book that I had read with so much apprehension.

"As I read, I said to myself: 'The man who wrote this was not telling the truth. All ministers could not be so rotten or indecent as the one he paints, or else the Christian Church would have fallen into ruin centuries ago. You cannot keep an institution alive with lies and rottenness.

"That set me thinking. I remembered the attack on religion that had cost me my faith and the faith of many of my classmates. Then, after twenty years, I found that the attack was still going on, and that people were still believing so firmly in religion that a chap as clever as this author had to bring all his powers of writing, plus lying and misrepresentation, to bear upon the same old 'defunct' religion. Religion was still alive, still serving people's needs.

"So I reasoned to myself: 'Evidently there is something to this religion business. If it has not been killed, if it has survived attacks like the one I knew at college and this present one, if its enemies have to resort to lies and misstatements to beat it, it must be pretty well established in human nature.' So, I went on, 'If it is natural to human nature, it may be the very thing I need. Perhaps, when at college, I gave up religion, I put something pretty important out of my life.'

"So, you see, that novel has really driven me back to religion. Father, do you think that religion would supply the need I feel in my soul?"

I paused momentarily before I began to talk, and thanked the enemy.

X.

EXPLAINING THE MIRACLES.

Undoubtedly the author made the life of St. Paul a graphic, vivid and moving story. Out of the Acts of the Apostles, plus a great quantity of legend and fable, he built his tale.

It was perfectly true that he could not distinguish between the carefully historical "Acts" and the legends which had been written by an apostate priest condemned by the early Church for writing them. Nevertheless, he made St. Paul a very real person, if a highly imaginative one.

And we found, as we read, that St. Paul was just a sort of self-hypnotised person who had persuaded himself of his mission and had really imposed himself on the other apostles. There was nothing supernatural about his call, and his visions were, of course, illusions.

Then suddenly the writer came face to face with the miracles of St. Paul's life. He found that St. Paul had healed the sick and raised the dead. Our author must have hesitated. What could he say to this? Everything else in the life of St. Paul was natural and easy to explain. Could he explain these miracles?

He could and did. He gives us the picture of St. Paul standing above the dead man, gathering his forces (he doesn't explain what the forces are), concentrating his powers (there is no clue to the character of these powers), and then flinging this concentrated energy by a mighty effort of will into the body of the dead man. And the dead man rises, as the sick had risen. The miracles of St. Paul are explained.

Of course, the explanation explained just nothing. Most of us could concentrate and gather our forces as long and as hard as we please. We could stand above the sick or the dead and fling by an act of our will our energies into them, but the sick would not rise and the dead would not even know we stood concentrating above them. If you doubt this, try it yourself at the sick bed of a friend or at the grave of an acquaintance. Try it and wait for the miracle.

It is relatively easy to explain the lives of the saints naturally as it is easy to explain the life of Christ plausibly until one comes to the miracles. But to explain them naturally and without recourse to God's intervention in behalf of His appointed minister, one has to talk with de-liberate vagueness or like an ignorant fool.

For just this reason, miracles, the miracles of Christ and the Apostles, are so important for Christianity. They simply cannot be explained naturally. The dead do not rise unless God raises them, and God will not raise them unless He approves the messenger or the apostle for whom the miracle is performed.

So God gave miracles in the early days of the Church, as He gives His Church today the miracles of Lourdes, simply because upon miracles we can base our faith. No natural explanation pushes them aside.

They are the clear signs that God has been, and is, with His Church.

XI

THE CATHOLICS I KNOW.

There is nothing so discouraging to a priest as to talk to a non-Catholic about the beauty and truth of the Catholic Church, and when he has finished to have the non-Catholic say:

"That may all be, Father; but I've known Catholics who weren't much like what you say the Church should make them."

It is an objection that he finds very hard to answer.

He may point to the saints of the Church, the saints that the Church alone has produced. He may tell of the sanctity of the contemplatives, and the sacrifice of Catholic fathers and mothers, and the heroism that sends young men and women into religious and priestly lives.

The non-Catholic does not know these souls. He knows some Catholics whose lives are selfish, whose manners are mean, whose viewpoint is petty and small, who lead lives none too honest, and whose hands are none too clean.

He admires the theory of the Catholic Faith, but the Catholics whom he knows seem badly to upset that theory by hard and sordid facts.

Undoubtedly, if all Catholics lived up to their Faith, the world would become Catholic in a generation. It is not our enemies who do us real harm; it is our own people, whose lives give the lie to the beauty and truth of the Church. Doctrine and ritual are hard to grasp; a life is concrete, right under my eyes, unescapable.

Since that is true, we Catholics have fearful responsibilities.

Each of us is for some non-Catholic "the Catholic that I know." Some non-Catholic is consciously or unconsciously making us a reason for liking or disliking the Church. He or she is watching us and saying, "The Church must be beautiful which has inspired a life like that." Or the comment may be, "I don't think much of a Church that has as one of its members so mean, petty, and unpleasant a person."

It is vastly important that we make our lives. an argument for the Faith. Doesn't it almost frighten one to think that one's way of living may be the thing that keeps souls away from the Church of Christ?

XII.

SMALL ACTS OF FAITH.

"Under pain of sin," concluded the priest in the pulpit, "one must occasionally make an act of faith."

The fine young man in the third last pew wrinkled his brow thoughtfully. He made a swift survey of the prayers he usually said, and realised with a start that never once did he make an act of faith.

In fact, he could not remember just how the act of faith went.

So he put his head in his hands and asked God's pardon for his failure.

The Elevation came, and the young man lifted his eyes and said, as he always did, "My Lord and my God!" When the Mass was finished, he genuflected profoundly and left the church, at the door of which he bought a Catholic paper

and glanced with approval over the article on the Church's claim to infallibility.

As he passed the Convent of the Good Shepherd on his walk home, he raised his hat respectfully to honour the Blessed Sacrament. A priest, hurrying off to an unexpected sick call, passed our youth, who again promptly lifted his hat.

He lived in a boarding house, and the crowd of fellow-boarders, mostly young men like himself, were gathered at the breakfast table, and still very sleepy-eyed. He stood at his place, and though he knew not one of the others was Catholic, made a large sign of the Cross, said his grace, and sat down.

"Gosh," said one of them, nudging his neighbour in appreciation of his joke, "I wish I believed that food was better after I had prayed over it."

"It is," the young man answered. "It's lots better, for it has God's blessing on it."

The young man finished breakfast, dashed to his room, slipped into a baseball uniform, and took a car for the park. Two nuns got on at a crossing, and he slipped their fare into the conductor's hand.

The game began, and the score see-sawed between the two teams. Then he came to bat at a crucial moment; and as he walked up, he closed his eyes and prayed for the strength to "knock it out of the lot." On his way back from the game, he dropped into St. Cronan's Church to thank God for that three-bagger.

That night, after he had examined his conscience, he prayed: "Oh, my God, I'm sorry that I forgot to make an act of faith today."

Sorry? And he had been making almost nothing else all day.

XIII.

BUT WAR GOES ON.

In our pacifist day we have to be a little bit careful when we suggest that life is a warfare. The good old spiritual truism has a military ring, and military rings are not in fashion. Battles are being legislated out of existence. The dove of peace is supposed to supplant the Roman eagle, and the sword has been made into safety-razor blades. War is barbarous, and in consequence must be abolished.

If ever war is abolished and men become so just and honourable that they can settle their international differences in courts of arbitration, no one will be happier than we Catholics. But as for the pacifism of our modern humanitarians, one knows that their pacifism regards only one type of war, the war of nation upon nation.

They seem quite oblivious in many cases to the wars that are being waged with fiercer intensity than ever in our modern society.

And the Catholic is keenly aware that these wars, the really terrible wars, are going on.

There is the war of atheists on God. There is the war of pagan lust in drama, literature, and life against the very decencies of morality in sex relationships.

Unrelenting war is being waged by "liberals" on the Ten Commandments.

The war of free love, companionate marriage, divorce, threaten the sacrament of marriage. Systematic warfare is waged against God's unborn children.

The faith of our young people is subjected to a fierce onslaught.

The supposed civilised nations make intensive sallies against the Church as a feint for their attack against all religion.

Cynical intellectualism makes war on the supernatural.

In other words, for all our pacifism, the relentless war of evil against good goes on.

And terrible as are the consequences of the war between nations, these leave us Catholics rather cold and unimpressed compared with the thought of the ruin that would follow the triumph of the armies of atheism, pagan lust and unbelief, and the bloody peace that would spring from their victory over God, the Commandments, morality, little children, faith, purity, common decency, the Church.

Even if the war of nation on nation should forever be abolished, life would still be a battle, fierce, bitter, unending.
