

Sursum Corda

Again, 'Dispute Or Enjoy

By Rev James M. Gillis, C.S.P.

Seldom if ever have I used this column to answer correspondents, still less to carry on a personal controversy. But recently there appeared in the Brooklyn Tablet a letter by Arthur Knowles commenting upon and courteously criticizing the "Sursum Corda" article which appeared a few weeks ago under the heading, "Dispute or Enjoy." Mr Knowles has hit upon a matter of much importance not only to him and to me but, I think, to all who are interested in the spread of the Christian religion.

Today's brief piece, therefore, will be not so much a reply to this friendly critic but an amplification of what I said about logical disputation versus joyous affirmation as a means of making converts. To relieve the reader of the necessity of looking up the former article, perhaps we had better reprint its key sentence: "Bishop Prohaska is right. What we need is not more disputation but more joyousness. We dispute much because we do not enjoy. He who enjoys does not dispute much."

It would be unfortunate, says Mr Knowles, if that sentence and the article that contains it were misunderstood, but he thinks it "might easily be misunderstood." Now it is possible that I am not a good judge in the case. My admiration for Bishop Prohaska may blind me to a possible fault in his thinking. But I really see no danger of mistaking his mind, provided one sticks to his words just as he wrote them. "Dispute" and "joyousness" are not contradictory terms, says Mr Knowles. But Bishop Prohaska didn't say they are contradictory. Neither did I. He simply said that there was too much of one and not enough of the other. Both are necessary. Both are means to the end. The Bishop's thought is that the proportions according to which disputation and joy are mixed might with advantage be different. It is as though one should say, "Meat is necessary and green vegetables are necessary but less meat and more green vegetables would be better for the health." One who says that could not logically be accused of vegetarianism.

Later on in his letter Mr Knowles seems to say that I play into the hands of "positivists" who contend that "our converts are uniformly won solely on an emotional basis." But if the positivists make that contention they make it illogically. I have not recommended emotionalism as a substitute for intellectualism. Still less do I advocate going after converts "uniformly" with a "solely emotional" ap-

peal. To say that would be to distort the Bishop's words and mine. In fact to do so would be to act emotionally rather than intellectually. The intellectual thing is to take a man's words just as he says them.

Mr. Knowles says he fears that there is not enough discussion. His experience must be different from mine. I think there is too much discussion at least in proportion to the joyous manifestation of the Faith. Must I add once more that saying there is relatively too much discussion is not equivalent to saying that we should fall back upon emotion and abandon discussion?

In all modesty I think I may claim to have some slight competence to speak in this matter. I have been - after a fashion - a missionary for forty years. I have done a heap of discussion. Perhaps no man in my field has done more. But even though it be a kind of confession of wrong method, I now think after all these years that there is too much discussion - not indeed too much absolutely but relatively too much.

One more observation. I had written that perhaps St. Thomas himself if he had been outside the Faith would not have been converted by the arguments in his own majestic Summa Theologica. Mr Knowles calls that assertion "a grievous mistake." But as a matter of fact those arguments of themselves and by themselves never converted any one. Mr Knowles and every other person well informed on Catholic theology knows that intellectual conviction is not faith, and that therefore no one can come to the faith by intellectual conviction - even the intellectual conviction that might ensue upon a study of the Summa. Mr. Knowles speaks of Dr. Mortimer Adler. The mention of that illustrious Thomist scholar seems to be one more proof among a thousand that a man may be wholly convinced and yet not converted. Dr. Adler, in spite of his conviction of the truth of the Summa, remains outside the fold.

But besides the theological fact of the difference between intellectual conviction and faith, I have in mind the need of "throwing one's heart into the scales" as St. Augustine did to obtain conviction - not to say conversion. Pascal did just that. So did Newman, whom Mr. Knowles quotes. Indeed, there has not been in all theological literature a greater insistence upon the cooperation of the heart that is to say, the will and the emotions - than that which runs all through the works of John Henry Newman. His main thesis seems to me to have been, to borrow a phrase from Tennyson, that "heart and mind according well" will lead a man to the faith. That, I feel confident, is what Bishop Prohaska means to say. We must not make either the Bishop or his humble disciple, the writer of these lines, say more than he intended to say and in fact did say.

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Library Signpost

Lead, Kindly Light

By Rev. Benedict Ekmann

April 14: Feast of St. Justin born about 100 A. D. in Palestine of pagan parents converted to the Christian faith, when about 30 years old, as a result of studying the Scriptures and observing the courage of the martyrs, became a great lay defender of the Faith, especially with three valuable documents - two "Apologies" and the "Dialogue with Trypho" - important witnesses to the teaching of the early Church; martyred in Rome, Apr. 13 165. I like to think of this intrepid Catholic layman of the second century making the most of his gift of Faith. When you come to think of it, it must have been a strange time, critical and full of difficulties for the young Church. The last of the Apostles was dead; the first apostolic fervor no longer sustained the Christian communities; there were defections and betrayals; the Christians were still a despised minority; their Faith still seemed to most to be a strange freak from the East, "folly to the Greeks, and a stumbling-block to the Jews."

With our mountain-top view of the past, we can hardly appreciate how uncertain and hopeless (humanly speaking) the future of the Church must have looked to Christians at the turning of the second century. But, way over in out-of-the-way Palestine, God had set His mark upon the young man Justin, still a pagan searching the ways of wisdom from the philosophers; and the searcher's quest came to peace in the Church.

Justin had much to give to the cause of the Church - the talents of his mind and his pen and he gave them generously. He did not become a bishop or a priest to do his good work. His vocation was to be the first of a glorious line of laymen who, through the centuries, have been apostles with their pens.

St. Justin's particular chore was to show how the despised religion of the Crucified Jesus is the fulfillment of the truths gropingly discovered by philosophy. Such a defense and exposition of the Faith is known as an Apologia, which means "a speaking in behalf of someone or of something," and the one who undertakes it is an Apologist. Justin was the first Apologist in the history of the Church, but the line after him is long and glorious.

It was my Breviary reading on his Feast last Tuesday which freshened my memory of these things. The impression was all the deeper because I had just studied, a few hours before, an article by an Apologist of today, appearing in the current issue of The Atlantic Monthly. The writer is Michael de la Bedoyere, editor of the London Catholic Herald; the article is Christianity Now and After.

I cannot help thinking that this is St. Justin's spirit and technique, 20th century style. The article appears in a dangerous and violent time. It appears in a magazine of the world. It shows, masterfully and fervently, the position and prospects of the Church in a disintegrating world. The author is a layman, doing apostolic work for the Church with the written word.

The ordinary Catholic of today may hardly be expected to become enthusiastic about the 2nd century Apologies of St. Justin: valuable as they are for historians and apologists, they were written to meet the needs of a situation perhaps no longer interesting to the rank-and-file. But the Bedoyere article is Justin up-to-date, and I hope it will be read and needed by hundreds of ordinary Catholics. It

is more timely and far-seeing than anything I have yet come across on the future after the War, and on the spiritual influences now working to determine that future.

It is known that, as a result of Justin's writings, the emperor Antonius toned down his persecution of the Church. We may hope, in Christian prayer, for some such sensational outcome to the Bedoyere article. But if we want others to read it for its lessons and warnings, a law of Christian reciprocity requires us to do the same.

What about the Church in the world after the capital V? Don't we care? Is it that we say, "Oh, the Church will pull through somehow." Of course, she will, with Christ's guarantee against "the gates of hell", but what about tens of thousands of people lost to her in the meantime, and sent there something we you and I and all of us, dear readers can do about it, right now? Didn't Christ, in His Last Judgment sermon, warn us that we cannot save our souls without aiding others? And how are we of today - going to aid our brothers of today if we do not know what they need or where they are going?

It is a frightening thing to me to observe the complacency of our Catholic brethren, even in the priesthood. To me it is the surest sign of coming persecution in America. We are old-fashioned we plod along with model-T attitudes; we are ultra-conservative, and morbid about criticism. We are known mostly as the people who are "agin' things" - agin' birth-control, agin' burlesque, agin' Class C movies, agin' indecent literature. Our times are in the most violent ordeal and travail of history; and all we seem to have to offer are the plush and clover of "the good old days," when things were easygoing, and it was nice to read in an easychair about the foreign missions and the early martyrs.

But there are hopeful signs, few though they are, like the twelve Apostles who conquered the world. People faithfully on their knees, apostolic men and women, the martyr spirit, seems with their eyes on far horizons, voices with a new note in their propagation of the Faith. Of such is Michael de la Bedoyere. All the public liberals, I am sure, carry The Atlantic Monthly, and you can find there, in the April issue, his keen article on Christianity Now and After. Let's all read it.

Five Years Ago--

-in the files of the CATHOLIC COURIER

From Apr. 15, 1937

Enthroned as seventh Bishop of Buffalo before a distinguished gathering of the American Hierarchy, the Most Rev. John A. Duffy held out to the Catholic Church as the "antagonist and remedy" for the sin, selfishness and folly of the modern age in his installation sermon at St. Joseph's Cathedral, Buffalo.

Elmira Catholics gave full cooperation to the Elmira Community Motion Picture Council by sponsoring the presentation of three pictures of outstanding merit at the Regent Theater, that city.

Religious people provide a sound foundation for a nation, Supreme Court Justice William F. Love of Rochester told 200 members of St. Vincent de Paul's Holy Name Society at the annual Communion Breakfast in Corning. Justice Love praised the members for their devotion to God as demonstrated by the Corporate Communion in the parish church.

Appeal to prejudice: An argument that convinces people the other side is right. Appeal to intelligence: An argument that convinces us. -Scranton Tribune.

'Quiz' Corner

Why is the title "Cardinal" inserted between the first and surnames, as Patrick Cardinal Hayes?

The custom of cardinals using their title after their Christian name is a survival from the Middle Ages, when surnames were not in use. Thus a man signed himself Louis IX, King of France; George, Prince of Wales; Henry, Duke of Surrey, or John the Goldsmith, Frederick the Tanner. Today, this custom is retained by the cardinals, particularly in English speaking countries.

How may we know that a priest gives an absolution in Confession?

By the very fact that he says nothing about refusing it. If a priest denies absolution, he tells the penitent in very clear terms the reason for doing so and tries with the aid of God's grace by priestly zeal and kindly admonition to bring the party around to the dispositions necessary for a worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance.

Who is the patron saint of stenographers?

St. Genevieve is the patron saint of stenographers. He was a soldier, who, because of his proficiency in writing, was made a notary by the magistrates of Arles, in southern France. The dates of his birth and death are not known. It is probable that he was martyred under the reign of Maximian Hercules. Death came to him while he was still a Catechumen. His feast day is Aug. 25.

Will the prayers of one in a state of sin be heard by God?

Every sincere and earnest prayer, no matter by whom it is said, will be heard by God. Prayer is, in itself, an act of religion as well as a petition. But as a person in a state of serious sin cannot merit

before God, so, in the sinner's case, no merits are attached to his prayer. However, the petition will certainly be granted if it is for the grace to be converted and resist further sin. If the petition is for temporal favors, such as the recovery of bodily health, or for some other earthly advantage, it will be granted provided God sees that it will not prove a hindrance to the petitioner's spiritual welfare.

Isn't it superstitious to wear a scapular or a scapular medal believing it to be a charm against evil spirits or other evils?

Catholics do not consider either a scapular or a scapular medal as a charm against evils. We wear them in order to share in the good works of a religious order, in order to gain indulgences and to pledge ourselves as devout clients of our Lord or the Blessed Virgin or the Saints.

Trust in God

We cannot trust God - or distrust ourselves - too much. He never denies the petition of lively faith - our confidence is the measure of His gifts.

The reason is plain. Trust is a proof of love. It always exists between the loving and the loved, and is a proof of faith in the perfection of the goodness, power, wisdom and foresight of God. Take them all your difficulties, whatever they may be your daily life and conversation, the little circumstances of every hour, and all their perplexities - whatever they are take them to Him; lay them all before Him with a perfect confidence and firm reliance on His promises.

There is a comic side to every tragedy.

EDITORIALS

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Joseph, of the Sacred Heart of Jesus: it enables us to continue a spirit of prayer and devotion to our heavenly brethren. The internal acts of religion prompted by the external sign of our devotion, serve to win God's blessing, God's grace for us.

Death was, indeed, close at hand for the young soldier who had been cast up on the shores of a wild country: the spears of the natives were already raised to pierce his body, when the crucifix on his breast caught their attention. It was a sign unto them that this man was no enemy; no Jap, but the soldier of a Christian nation. They took him to their chief, gave him clothing and food, helped him find his way back to his command.

The event means more to us because the young soldier was from Auburn. Catholics are eager to see that all of our boys, particularly the sons of our own families, shall have a supply of medals, scapulars, crosses, rosaries, and other sacramentals, to wear or to carry as an ever-present reminder of their religion. Bearing the form or the image of Our Lord and His saints, constructed to remind us of them, these sacramentals have received the blessing of Holy Mother Church which has dedicated them to religious use and has asked God's special protection on all who wear or use them.

There was no miracle in the salvation of this young soldier from impending doom. It was a natural result of a natural cause. It was the sign of the Redeemer to those who knew no other sign that would so quickly identify a friendly soldier who lay helpless before them. It was sign enough to lead them to spare him, and to bring him to safety. But in the coming years, a sacred memory to that young man shall be the protection brought to him by the crucifix he wore on his breast. May all of us find protection against spiritual dangers in the right use and appreciation of the sacramentals of God's Church!

OTHER SHEEP I HAVE

Christ died for all men. He founded His Church to save all men. No man stands outside the pale of salvation because Christ has willed it so. Christ wills all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.

This is no abstract statement of doctrine. It is a most concrete declaration of the love of the Saviour Himself. That men may know how close to His Sacred Heart is this consuming desire for man's salvation. He in the Gospel of this Sunday portrays Himself as the "Good Shepherd." It is not a title He receives from one of His followers; it is a title He gives to Himself.

The people to whom He spoke knew the life of a shepherd, knew his duties, his responsibilities, his dangers; knew when he was a Good Shepherd, knew when he was a hireling. Christ used their knowledge of all these things, to impress on them how eager He was for the salvation of all men. "I am the Good Shepherd!" For those of the fold He was ready to lay down His very life, that they might not suffer harm.

"Other sheep I have that are not of this fold." Christ can never be satisfied with the salvation of a few: He desires that all shall come into His fold. "Them also must I bring." Working with Christ, the true member of His Church will have always the kindest feeling towards our separated brethren; will have some part of that interest which the Good Shepherd takes in those that are not of the fold; will be ready to say the prayer, utter the word, give the invitation; that may help Christ bring them into the true fold of the Catholic Church.