

"YOU, OF COURSE BEING A CATHOLIC . . ."

Arnold Lunn

• "She was only eighteen when she married and she didn't know what love was until she met Bobby, so they had an affair. You, of course, being a Catholic, will think that wrong."

"Why 'As a Catholic'? Your Protestant mother would be pretty cross with you for implying that the prejudice against adultery is a Romish innovation."

My friend looked puzzled. "Oh! I suppose you are right, but you people make much more fuss about that kind of thing. It doesn't seem to me very Christian to be so intolerant. After all Christ said: 'Her sins are forgiven her because she loved much!'" —a favorite quotation with those who find it convenient to forget what Christ said about impurity and who have never bothered to discover the context of these words. It was not because the sinner had loved those with whom she sinned, but because she had repented and loved Christ, that her sins were forgiven her (Luke

7:47) Christ did not say to the woman taken in adultery "go and sin again."

In proportion as those who still describe themselves as Christian reject the traditional Christian doctrines on faith and morals, the word Christian is losing all trace of its original meaning, with results which Catholics are not alone in deploring.

"It will really be a great nuisance," writes Mr. C. S. Lewis, if the word Christian becomes simply a synonym of good, for historians, if no one else, will sometimes need the word in its proper sense and what will they do? . . . The other day I had the occasion to say that certain people were not Christian; a critic asked how I dared to say so, being unable (as of course I am not) to read who profess belief in the specific doctrines of Christianity." My critic wanted me to use the word in what he would call a far deeper sense, so deep that no human observer

could tell to whom it applies (Spectator, September 22, 1944)

In proportion as the word "Christian" loses all its original significance, Catholics will find that they will be scolded for their fidelity to doctrine which were once the common heritage of Catholics and Protestants.

In my controversy with Dr. Joad (Is Christianity True?) he devoted a vigorous letter to an attack on the Christian doctrine of hell, and was shocked and surprised when I reminded him that we owe this doctrine not to the Church (which he was attacking) but to Christ, whom he revered. Indeed he expressed regret that I should advertise the fact that one for whom he professed such respect should have originated so deplorable a doctrine.

The late Dr. Coulton, who was not as ready as Dr. Joad to concede a point, merely relapsed into silence when again and again in our book, *Is the Catholic Church Anti-Social?*—which should have appeared before this article is in print—I drew his attention to the fact that he was, in effect, attacking the Catholic Church simply for her fidelity to the teaching of Christ.

He complained, for instance, that St. Thomas Aquinas contrasts the "few" who shall be

saved with the "very many" who shall be damned. But Christ's statement, taken verbally, seems scarcely less severe: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14).

Again, he wrote: "In the Middle Ages everything tended in theory to the salvation of souls." How medieval! Almost as medieval as Christ. He continued: "The orthodox thinker looked first, secondly and lastly to the salvation of souls, as outweighing unquestionably all prosperities of princes or states; and so it must always be with any Church which follows the medieval eschatology." It was not a medieval pope who said: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world; and lose his own soul?"

Even more significant was Dr. Coulton's reluctance to define what he meant by the word "Christian," and this in spite of the fact that he began our book by demanding a clear definition "of the two most important words in this thesis, 'Catholic Church.'" But all my efforts, efforts which provoked complaints of my "pertinacity," failed to elicit any statement of the doctrines which Dr. Coulton holds to be *de fide* for a

man who claims the Christian name. "In fact," I wrote, you reject all the characteristic Christian beliefs, the claims which Christ made and the miracles whereby He gave proof of those claims, the doctrines which He enjoined on His disciples. If I have done you an injustice in assuming that you are a Unitarian, you may correct me before I exercise my right to wind up this discussion.

To my question whether "Unitarians are members of Christ's Church," Dr. Coulton answered: "I answer emphatically, Yes." "When I used a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less."

An interesting article appeared in the *Anglo-Catholic Church Times* for December 15, 1944. The article, which was an attempt to discover that "nominal Christians" believe, was based on several thousand questions asked about religion by members of the Services. "Time and again," says the author,

I have met men and women who regard themselves as nominal members of a Christian denomination either Anglican or Nonconformist, and yet have denied that Jesus Christ was the son of God . . . Few such critics show any sign of know-

ing that their heretical views place them outside the tents of the faith they claim to hold.

And he points out that the Churches which claim thousands of nominal members in the Services

ignore the fact that many of their adherents repudiate categorically essential doctrines. They are self-styled Trinitarians with Unitarian convictions. Here is one of the fundamental reasons why the churches remain empty — why this huge army of young people never show any desire to enter the House of God. (Bolds mine).

Why do people who repudiate all the characteristic Christian doctrines cling so tenaciously to the Christian name? First of all, Christianity is still the established religion in England, and it requires real conviction to exchange the great cathedrals with their hallowed associations for Unitarian chapels. The man who describes himself as Christian does not feel an outsider on national days of prayer and thanksgiving. He belongs. Westminster Abbey is his Abbey. (It was once ours.) Secondly, the word "Christian" is coming to be an indication, not of doctrine but only of certain moral qualities. "Christian morality" is the kind of morality which the man who uses the term happens to admire. We have even been

assured that the Russian Communists are genuine exponents of practical Christianity. Thirdly, an anti-Catholic propagandist can unfortunately count on the support of old-fashioned Protestants if he is careful to conceal the fact that he does not accept the basic dogmas which all Protestants once accepted. Non-atholics may be divided into those who feel that they have more in common with a camouflaged Unitarian who at-

tacks the Church than with Catholics and those who instinctively rally to our side when we are attacked. My own guess is that the traditional type of Protestant is drawing closer to us in proportion as Unitarianism gains ground in Protestant communions. But it is difficult to see what can arrest the erosion of Unitarianism except divine authority.

—From America.

FOR ADULTS, TOO

A priest reproached one of his parishioners: "You are not a good Christian. You do not practice your religion."

"How can you say that," answered the man aggrieved. "I always send my children to Mass."

"Yes, that's wrong."

"What? It is wrong for me to send my children to Mass?"

"Yes. You should not send your children to Mass. You should accompany them."

YOU TAKES YOUR CHOICE

A prominent official of the government met a humble priest and decided to have some fun with him on the subject of religion. He choose as his subject confession.

"Father, I never go to confession for the very simple reason that I never commit any sins."

"My dear sir," answered the priest: "I know only two classes of people who never commit sins. They are those who have not yet attained the use of reason and those who have lost their reason."

LAZIEST MAN

A contest was held for the laziest man of a certain state. Without much ado, he was discovered and elected. The judges found him in bed. "John, you won the contest for being the laziest man in our state." "Yuh? What's the prize?" "\$10" "Uh, alright roll me sidewise and place it in muh pocket"