

FROM THE HOUSETOPS

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CONVERSATION WITHOUT CONVERSION

HOWARD CANNON

WHY, yes, I'm a Catholic. I thought you knew. I haven't mentioned it explicitly before because I've gathered from various remarks you've made that you're not too fond of the Church, and I haven't wanted our friendship to be endangered by a possible argument on religion.

But you say you really want to talk about the Church? Yes, of course, I'd be glad to tell you about it. But you must promise first that you won't become annoyed at anything I may say. All right, then. Now, to begin with let me state that I am a Catholic because I've discovered that only in the Church can I find that feeling of peace and security, of real satisfaction, that I, and I believe all men, desire. I'm perfectly willing to admit that others may find it elsewhere, but for me it is supplied by Catholicism.

Yes, what you say is very true. The Church has often been responsible for retarding progress. I'm the first to admit that. But you must realize that the Church of today is not the Church of 500 years ago, or even of 50 years ago. Take, for instance, the matter of the Church and education. There was a time, not too long ago, when the schools run by the Church were dreadfully inferior to secular institutions. But that has been remedied. Today we are able to point with pride to the vast number of Catholic school graduates who are enrolled in our great secular universities. The Church in this country is at last being wrested from the hands of the ignorant lower classes, who with their narrow viewpoints and atrocious taste have controlled it for years. The Church today is in the hands of men of intelligence and discrimination, who can be relied upon to improve the liturgy and to effect other changes necessary for giving us a Church we can be proud of. And likewise in all her other undertakings the Church clearly shows that she has emerged from her reactionary period and is now earnestly striving to make this a better world in which to live.

Franco? No, of course I haven't forgotten him. But I assure

you that we are probably more anxious to be rid of him than you are. Franco is a great source of embarrassment to all Catholics who want to see the Church respected by the world as an institution that is progressive and attuned to the times.

No, you're wrong. The Church is not against science. You're thinking again of the Church of the Dark Ages. But I tell you the Church has changed. Why, many of the greatest scientists in the world today are Catholics — many of them priests. Yes, that's right, priests are now being trained at the great intellectual centers of the world, because we know now that if a priest is to do his work properly he must know not merely theology and Holy Scripture but also such things as mathematics, physics, chemistry, psychology, sociology, and archaeology. By having our priests trained in this way, we can show non-Catholics that the Church is no longer narrow and biased but is a great instrument for the advancement of science.

Why, do you know that scientists are just now discovering things that the Church has known for centuries? Take Freud, for instance, and his hypothesis of the Id, Ego, and Super-ego. That's just what the Church has been teaching in her doctrine of original sin. The Id is original sin, and the Super-ego is the grace we are given to overcome it and to aspire to higher things. And psycho-analysis. That's just the secular name for Confession. So you see that far from being anti-scientific, quite the reverse is true; the world is just now beginning to catch up to the Church in scientific achievement.

Now there you go again, making accusations against the Church which are just not true. The Church is not intolerant. It's the ignorant, bigoted Irish clergy who have given the Church that reputation. But I assure you they're only a small part of the Church. Intelligent Catholics, clergy and laity alike, know that it's utterly absurd to argue over insignificant points of dogma when there is so much more important work to be done. That is why Catholic priests are meeting on inter-faith platforms with Protestants and Jews, so that the points on which we agree — like fighting Communism and improving social conditions — may be emphasized rather than the points on which we differ. We are trying to overcome the great deal of anti-Catholic prejudice that still exists in many parts of this coun-

try. We want to make it clear that Catholics are above all else good Americans and that we have no interest in proselytizing or in doing anything that might disturb the country's harmony.

Doesn't the Church teach what? That outside the Church there is no salvation? Oh, yes, but that was defined at a time when almost all the known world was Catholic. It requires interpretation to make that statement conform to the present state of the world. It's true, in a way, that outside the Church there is no salvation. But you see that doesn't refer merely to the body of the Church. It refers to the soul of the Church as well. And all those who don't belong to the body of the Church are saved by belonging to its soul. Yes, I suppose you're right; the statement is pretty meaningless. And, frankly, it isn't emphasized too much any more.

Oh, yes, of course some people go to hell. In fact a great many Catholics go to hell. Could I go to hell? Well, yes, I suppose it's possible. But it's certainly unlikely, at least so long as I continue leading the good Catholic life I'm leading now. You see, I go to Mass every morning; my wife and I always recite prime in the morning and compline in the evening; I have four children whom I'm training to be as good Catholics as I am. I'm an intelligent and realistic Catholic. I don't merely hold to dogmas in blind obedience; I adapt my faith to meet changing world conditions. And whenever I meet someone like yourself who asks me to tell him about the Faith, I always do so.

HOW DO LIBERAL CATHOLICS TALK?

JUAN M. RIBERA

SINCE the Reformation, back in the dawn of modern times, the heresies which it ushered into the world have always been fought by the Church. In spite of that, some Catholics have been intoxicated by the political consequences which naturally derive from the theological and philosophical errors maintained by the heresiarchs. The intoxication has gone so far as to make them completely forget the heretical nature of Protestant thought. This lack of discrimination between truth and error is the cause of the association of Catholic