

## The Church that Always Re=Conquers

WHAT PROMINENT CONVERTS HAVE SAID.

(By J. I. P. Goodwin, in *Stella Maris*.)

"During the eighteenth century," wrote Macaulay in the middle of the nineteenth, "the influence of the Church of Rome was constantly on the decline. Unbelief made extensive conquests in all the Catholic countries of Europe, and in some countries gained a complete ascendancy. The Papacy was at length brought so low as to be an object of derision to infidels, and of pity rather than of hatred to Protestants. During the nineteenth century this fallen Church has been gradually rising from her depressed state and reconquering her old dominion. No person who calmly reflects on what, within the last few years, has passed in Spain, in Italy, in South America, in Ireland, in the Netherlands, in Prussia, even in France, can doubt that the power of this Church over the hearts and minds of men is now greater far than it was when the Encyclopaedia and the Philosophical Dictionary appeared. It is surely remarkable that neither the moral revolution of the eighteenth century nor the moral counter-revolution of the nineteenth should, in any perceptible degree, have added to the domain of Protestantism."

Had Macaulay lived over such a span of years as would have enabled him to view the situation as it exists to-day, there is no doubt but that we should have benefited from a series of historical comments equally as perspicuous in their grasp of essential facts and equally as graceful in their unintended compliments to a religion that was not his. Macaulay had had an eye capable of penetrating beyond the almost opaque wall of prejudice which the popular publicist, and a perverse press, has succeeded in erecting between the people and the truth. Matters have developed on the lines he indicated in the middle of the nineteenth century, until to-day we see the Old Church not only alive, but once more flourishing, in a state that almost approximates to that of her pristine glory.

Converts! That is the word.

So numerous are they in this and other countries, that the spectacle of their continuous flow back to the home of their Holy Mother has evoked from the adversary the weak comment that the "returns from Rome" are on a somewhat larger scale than the "Roman" cares to admit. Of course, such vague innuendo, in the very nature of the case, is not easy to answer, for the simple reason that it so seldom rises from the sphere of innuendo, to that of concrete fact. But we propose to draw up a short symposium of what has been said by prominent converts of the last few years. Many issues of this journal might be filled with matter equally as vital and significant, but the few selections we have chosen are representative of the positions of leading men, who have joined the ranks of the Catholic Church.

Let them say what it feels like to be a convert.

"No Shade of Doubt."

Cardinal Henry Edward Manning, one of the towering figures of the nineteenth century, abandoned Anglicanism in 1851. Thirty-five years after his conversion he wrote:

*"From the hour I saw the full light of Catholic faith, no shade of doubt has ever passed over my reason or my conscience. I could as soon believe that a part is equal to the whole, as that Protestantism, in any shape, from Lutheranism to Anglicanism, is the revelation of the day of Pentecost."*

"The Net is Broken, and We Are Delivered."

In 1870, Mr. Gladstone wrote as follows, concerning John Henry Newman's conversion:

"Of this most remarkable man I must pause to speak a word. In my opinion, his secession from the Church of England has never yet been estimated among us at anything like the full amount of its calamitous importance."

Innumerable hardships, inflicted by a thoughtless and callous world, made the path of life hard for the beloved Cardinal, and gave rise to a crop of rumors concerning his happiness. The following is characteristic of his replies:

"... I have had no changes to record, and have had no anxiety of heart whatever. I have been in perfect peace and contentment. I never have had one doubt."

"From the day I became a Catholic to this day, now close upon thirty years, I have never had a moment's misgiving that the Communion of Rome is that Church which the Apostle set up at Pentecost, which alone has the adoption of the sons, and the glory, and the covenants, and the revealed law, and the service of God, and the promises, and in which the Anglican communion, whatever its merits and demerits, whatever the great excellence of individuals in it has, as such, no part. Never have I for a moment hesitated in my conviction, since 1845, that it was my clear duty to join the Catholic Church, as I did then join it, which in my own conscience I felt to be divine. Persons and places, incidents and circumstances of life, which belong to my first forty-four years, are deeply lodged in my memory and my affections; moreover, I have had more to try and afflict me in various ways as a Catholic than as an Anglican; but never for a moment have I wished myself back; never have I ceased to thank my Maker for His mercy in enabling me to make the great change, and never has He let me feel forsaken by Him or in distress, or any kind of religious trouble."

"I have not had one moment's wavering of trust in the Catholic Church ever since I was received into her fold. I hold, and ever have held, that her Sovereign Pontiff is the centre of unity and the Vicar of Christ; and I ever have had, and have still, an unclouded faith in her creed and in all its articles; a supreme satisfaction in her worship, discipline, and teaching; and an eager longing, and a hope against hope, that the many dear friends whom I have left in Protestantism may be partakers of my happiness. . . . Return to the Church of England! No! the net is broken and we are delivered. I should be a consummate fool (to use a mild term) if, in my old age, I left the land flowing with milk and honey, for the city of confusion and the house of bondage."

"The Glorious Virgin, In All Her Celestial Radiance."

These are the words of the quondam Quaker, one of the most distinguished of his sect in England, who became a Catholic in 1839, Frederick Lucas, M.P., founder of the *London Tablet*, writing to Quaker friends, he said:

"As a child who has lost himself, he knows not where, far from home, returns weeping and weary to his mother's breast, so after long wandering in darkness, seeking for truth, but finding no rest because I could find no certainty, I have at length come, tired out with profitless labor, to find repose and consolation within that temple whose eternal gates are ever open to invite the weary and erring pilgrim to enter in. . . ."

"I have accepted the invitation: I have entered in; and within I have found, not the mutilated limbs of truth, but the glorious virgin herself, in all her celestial radiance."

"I Had Carefully Investigated the Subject. . . ."

Labor owes a deep debt of gratitude to John Mitchell, New York, for all he did for its cause. In 1907, he entered the Church, and in 1910 he wrote:

"My conversion pleased my wife as a matter of course, but that was not the motive that guided me in the matter. I had carefully investigated the subject and had long since made up my mind that I wanted to die in the Catholic faith.

"I am going to do my utmost to be a good Catholic and not one of whom there are so many in the world, who use the Catholic Church only when in sore distress. I want to be a consistent Catholic and a useful one."

"An Ever-Deepening Peace. . . ."

"In 1814 Aubrey De Vere first saw the light of day in Ireland. What true lover of poetry does not know his charming contributions to modern literature? After being in the Church for 23 years he said:

"In the Church I have found an ever-deepening peace, a freedom ever-widening, a genuine and a fruitful method for theological thought, and a truth which brightens more and more into the perfect day."

"Port After Storm."

The year 1883 saw the reception of Sir Bertram Windle, F.R.S., one of the world's most distinguished scientists. From St. Michael's College, Toronto, he wrote in 1921:

"'Port after storm doth greatly please'; I think that about sums up my view. I know that it is often thought that converts would like to go back if they were not ashamed to do so. I can only speak for myself and say