

## Brainwashing with Clean Water

We look out on a scene which is troubled indeed. The world seems to be in a state of convulsions and nobody knows what is going to happen. Probably for the first time in history, humanity is seriously considering if it is not at its last days because we are now face to face with discoveries so great that it would seem as if God in his own good time is going to permit man to terminate the existence of this world, and some people are wondering if the time is not now.

The Legion has been playing an increasing part in surprisingly many of the fields of religious thought and action, and the feeling gains ground that it is not only fitted, but intended by God, to be one of the decisive factors. This is talking the language of optimism, but I think that it will be justified if the Legion continues to grow in its numbers and not to diminish in its purpose. The numbers will come if the purpose will depend on our motives. So I discuss the question of motives.

## **‘Brainwashing’ and Meditation**

All are familiar with that system of mental conditioning by the Communists – what is called by the colourful name of ‘brainwashing’. They have a detailed process for doing it, a long-drawn-out-one, and for its victims a rather painful and ruthless one. But really there is nothing else in that undoubtedly efficacious science but an equivalent to the Church’s system of meditation and general devotion. This is a way of supplying the mind with motives and atmosphere out of which we will look on life from a pre-determined angle.

The effectiveness of this in the case of the Communists has been evident. Likewise it has been in the case of Catholics who have sought to nourish their minds with correct motives and to keep their principles clear. But probably not so many Catholics have thus sought deliberately to give right direction to their minds. Perhaps the reason for this lies in the fact that the idea of meditation usually presents itself as an intellectual exercise. Certainly books on the subject so present it. Most of us do not feel completely equal to the mental gymnastics which seem to be proposed. It looks like a difficult business, and accordingly it will not be attempted by the ordinary people. Therefore the injunctions which are being all the time addressed to people to meditate on the truths of their religion and to condition their minds in the right way, fall upon ears that are deaf. Therefore we must put to ourselves the question: Is there a simpler way?

I think that there is, and that we are already partly in possession of it in the Legion in very simple form. The whole course of our Legion membership represents that process though we may not be adverting to it. It can be stepped up to an immense extent if we see it as a system and work it.

## **A Simple Way of Meditation**

It consists in the idea which is proposed to us throughout all our literature: that we must unite our actions with doctrines and holy thoughts appropriate to those actions. It means that we must never do a thing simply because the Legion of Mary says by rule that we are to do it. We must go deeper than this and perceive what is the spiritual root out of which our action will issue like a flower. The two must go together, and it has been recommended to you that in every meeting at least one report should be seized upon to try to show that life-giving connection. By questioning and by judicious commentary we should bring to light, not merely for the reporting member but for the entire praesidium, that motive, that root. The action must be seen as a spiritual transaction. In the Legion or out of the Legion, all our life should be an expression of our Christianity. For Christianity is our life. Some doctrine must be the motive of every action. Not necessarily is the act always to be hinged on to one doctrine. We should ring the changes, now bringing in one sacred motive and now another.

## **Actions and Projections of Doctrine**

The Mystical Body is Jesus Christ in whom is the Holy Trinity and the Blessed Virgin and all men. Therefore in each one of our actions is being projected the Person and the action of Our Lord. That is, every one of our actions is a projection of Christian doctrine. The Christian doctrines represent the thoughts and actions of Jesus Christ. But we must try to vary the precise angle of looking at things, so that eventually we will cover the whole range of doctrine.

The ordinary Catholic and legionary procedure accomplishes this process to a large extent, even when not



specifically contemplated or properly understood. As one example of this, I mention an acute observation of the late Cardinal Bourne of England which would not occur to many minds. He said that having our long prayers at the beginning of the meeting was a wonderful psychological staging, as well as being an important spiritual one. Most people, in any case in a city like London, would reach the end of the day with rather frayed nerves. After that they are just about ready to have a scrap with somebody when they come to a meeting. As a consequence many of the meetings of societies indulged in some wrangling. This is another way of saying that they are not going to accomplish much.

### **Legion Prayers - Tranquillisers**

The legionaries like everybody else would enter with those edged nerves, but instead of getting down to business and to trouble right away; there was a preparatory tranquillising process. They were immersed for the time of the Rosary in holy inspirations and sweetened with spiritual motives. Then when the time arrived for business, the poor nerves had cooled off. An effective soothing had taken place. This had produced results which would never be got by injunctions to be harmonious and kind to each other.

That is good. But a potent atmosphere is not enough. It can be a useful prelude to action, but it must be complemented by the deliberate feeding of motives to the mind, so that in the end we make not only the Legion meeting but our whole lives an expression of doctrine. Thereby we not only make them rich in grace, but we can even go so far as to give attractiveness to circumstances which would normally be repellent. And this is absolutely essential if we are going to face up to the worthwhile tasks such as are only going



to be accomplished by devotion, sacrifice and in some cases immense suffering. Nowadays there is hardly a post comes to us which does not bring news of the murdering or mutilation of legionaries in the line of their duty.

### **Faith Expressed in Life**

If legionaries are going to a person who is distasteful to them in some way or another, either filthy or truculent or abusive, it is necessary to counter the natural revulsion by supplying the mind with a motive which not only balances that other feeling, but even weighs down the scale against it! More than that! As I have said, it can lend enchantment to that uninviting approach. It is legionary bedrock that we think of Our Lady as coming with us to that person in whom her son is being so badly treated. The very notion of that is compelling. At once a new ingredient has entered into the mind and so affects it that the mental processes, and the actions which follow, are radically altered.

We have all seen people working at chemical experiments. There is a liquid in a vessel. A few drops of something else are added to it and at once it becomes different. It has assumed a different colour or it has started to foam or boil. That striking change, caused by the addition of the new ingredient, is an image of the process which we are seeking to study and to apply as scientifically as possible to our minds. Our purpose is the subjecting of the mind to spiritual injections which will change the composition and the course of our ideas.

### **Applying Doctrine the Way to Power**

We must not stop short at that simple idea of Our Lady being with us and looking after her son; we must go on to

other aspects. We must turn from her to the Holy Spirit, her spouse without whom she does not act. Where Our Lady is, the Holy Ghost is. She is an expression of the Holy Spirit, the making visible of his very action. That happens whether we advert to it or not. But as so often insisted upon in our system, when these things are adverted to and understood, the efficacy of the transaction is incomparably enhanced. It is the understanding of Christian doctrine that is so important. And conversely, if by an understanding of the divine truths we enter into the mind of Christ, shall we not also receive his power?

We could in the same action go on to the idea of the Father, and thus make the approach to someone whom we are visiting, an exercise of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. But the bringing in of all the different persons at that moment would overburden the mind and be a distraction from the treatment which we have to administer to that individual. We have to deal with him on human lines by speech and behaviour, and we cannot at the same time carry on a fully-fledged meditation. So one idea at a time is enough, but we could make all those other applications of Christian doctrine over a period, something different every week. All this is accomplishing the essentials of meditation, and yet it is only an action to which a mere thought has been added.

### **To Grasp a Doctrine, Practice it**

It is another of the Legion's ideas that it is only by practising a doctrine that we can grasp it. The reason why the legionaries have been able to get so much out of the doctrines of the Mystical Body and of Our Lady's Motherhood of Grace is that they are practising them. It used to be contended that those doctrines were select

and inaccessible. But the root has been attached to the flower, and then both the root and the flower have gained their meaning. A mental glance is all that is necessary, not a process which could be described as meditation. The thought carries on in the action and the action becomes meditation – as the soul gives dignity to the body.

In the lives of Our Lord and Our Blessed Lady we will find a multitude of events and circumstances which we can link up with the situations in which we find ourselves. And here it is necessary to insist that we must have knowledge of those two persons for whom we are living. Therefore we must read about them, especially in the New Testament. In that little document the person of Our Lord emerges much more vividly than through any other means; his speeches and his movements are wonderfully chronicled there.

In the spiritual or physical defilement of a person, and we deal with so many who are in that plight, we contemplate the Passion of Our Lord. If somebody reviles us or strikes us, we can think of Our Lord scourged and insulted. There is a veritable magic in that thought. If we can really represent to ourselves, in such a way that the mind accepts as true, the fact that we along with Our Lord are receiving ill-usage, that treatment, though it may hurt, has become sweet.

### **A Way to Holiness and Heroism**

Or we can think of the apostles as they go out from their severe flogging. No crying or whining; nothing but a rejoicing at the thought of having been privileged to suffer for the Lord.

To descend from that exalted plane to our own conditions, let us think of that Chinese Spiritual Director



who was probably the first to be condemned in the desperate persecution in China. When he wakened up to the fact that he was being marched out to be executed, he was so overwhelmed by the realisation that he was going to die for Christ that his joy became uncontrollable and was visible to all.

We must not think that the same is beyond us. The extreme measure of his sacrifice will not be so often required, but a million lesser ones will be exacted. In each one of them, big or small, the summoning of a thought of the right kind can operate transformingly – like that ingredient added to the chemical mixture. It can give the mind the force which will lift it from the baser levels and give it the temper of holiness and heroism. But these conditioning thoughts must be valid ones. They must be something that the mind accepts as true.

### **Spiritualise Action: Neutralise Weakness**

That supplying of counterbalance to the impulses of nature is important as enabling us to go on and perform an action which we might not otherwise do. But a higher aspect is that the action is spiritualised. An act proceeding from a mere benevolence towards a person will not open the floodgates of grace for us as the realisation of the Christian idea would do. Actually the whole Legion system depends on those twin ideas of spiritualising our actions and at the same time proposing a counterpoise to the weaknesses of nature. From beginning to end the praesidium meeting is an exercise along those lines.

In particular the reports fulfil that twofold function. In a gentle but compelling way they neutralise a certain natural reluctance. If we were assigned to a task but never required to report on it, it would probably happen that

the task would not be done. It is the duty of having to report it at the next meeting which ensures the satisfactory performance of the work.

### **Examine Reports**

In the second place, there is that spiritualising aspect. The reports should be examined very carefully by each one listening with a view to judging if everything is going as it should, and if the legionary motives are in play. The praesidium should not be too easy on those who are inclined to slack. That is not a hardness. It is service to them. It is an act of love.

We must try to bring to bear all the things which will counterbalance the operations of weak nature; which will, so to speak, keep us on an even keel so that we can set out with confidence and without too much fear on the voyage of doing the Lord's work. Fear, inertia, disgust, human respect – these are the powerful enemies of the apostolate. We are dominated by them. If we do not stand up to them and battle it out in a resolute way with them, they will certainly gain the victory over us.

### **A Word with the Holy Ghost**

We must cultivate the idea of approach to the Holy Spirit who is the source of knowledge and enterprise and zeal and inspiration and courage. We should get into the habit of having a word with him at every difficult moment. To the extent that when we do so, we gain the mastery over our weaker side. We can even become charged with divine energy. But it is important to realise that the Holy Spirit is going to answer our call. If we want ordinary light, we know where to get it. We believe that if we push a switch the room will be flooded with that light which we want. If

we truly believe that by turning to the Holy Spirit we are certain to get help from him in our difficulty, we will by very instinct hurry to importune him.

It does not of course follow that we will get the precise aid which we demand. If we ask Him for light, it does not mean that the very first notion which flashes through the mind proceeds from the Holy Spirit. But what we must believe is that recourse to him is going to be answered; and that in the very best way.

This whole question of stress or inclination at the beginning of our acts is all-important in human affairs. Because when a thought enters the mind, it rushes off in some particular direction. Once started, it has a tendency to continue on that course. Therefore it is vital to ensure that the initial direction is a right one. Because if two lines constantly diverge from a starting-point, one will end up at the North Pole and other at the South Pole. Applied to the moral order, this would mean that such a divergence of ideas can end up in one case in the friendship of nations, and in the other in war. Little fires can turn into great conflagrations; so make sure that the fire that originates is the fire of the Holy Ghost and not a devil's kindling.

Spirituality and materialism both can start from the very same point; and holiness and wickedness; and success and failure. All can represent different prolongations of straight lines from the one point. Apply this principle to the situation where hopelessness and failure hold sway, and where everybody is satisfied that nothing can be done. For instance, get the Legion going and in one minute the atmosphere has changed. At least that little group has become hopeful and is moving. Where is that going to end? Perhaps in the very opposite to that original state of deadness. Such is the difference between the positive



and the negative, between nature left to itself and nature corrected and stimulated.

Moreover, this whole process operates irrespectively of people's qualities. I do not mean to say that learning and knowledge and talents do not count, because of course they do. But a useful working out of the foregoing methods does not depend on great qualities. A person without them can exploit any means of grace and perhaps accomplish more than genius could.

So in every need we must turn to those heavenly powers and talk in simple terms to them. They know our problems better than we do, but the idea of Christianity is a co-operation between them and ourselves. We have to behave to God as if he were a human person listening to us – which of course he is, inasmuch as Our Lord is truly man.

Now let us get down to the detail of that process which we might call 'brainwashing with holy water'. That is, the methodical presentation to the mind of images and motives to which it will respond. Seek to have many of them stored in the recollection, so as to relieve the mind by change of idea. The gospel and the literature of the saints will furnish an abundance of them. The effort to add to them will be an effort to know God better, and he will reward that effort.

Faith is the Christian foundation. So strengthen it by various reflections. As examples of overwhelming faith, consider Mary at the Annunciation, or Mary at the Cross, or Mary at the Tomb, or the Magi after their long journey introduced to lowliness itself – and yet not grumbling or doubting as we might have feared. They opened up their treasures and with overflowing hearts presented them; or the Centurion seeing God in debasement and death. So

when everything looks black, unprofitable, fallen down on us, turn the thoughts to such examples. It will be found that in a second our spirit is revived so that we can press on undaunted.

In these days when tales are told of attacks on women, it is necessary to fortify them for the Legion work which takes them into precisely the surroundings which their minds will fear. Let them think about the Flight into Egypt by night, off the beaten paths, away from people, through territory infested by wild animals and brigands. Moreover this cameo gives one the opportunity to dwell on St Joseph who must never be left out of Legion affairs. For we, like Mary and Joseph, are carrying the Lord with us.

The Poor Reception – so often the legionary fate! Turn the mind to the dire phrase: ‘no room for them in the Inn at Bethlehem’; or to Simon the Pharisee’s cold treatment of Our Lord as his guest; or to Our Lord’s rejection by his own townspeople.

When duty has to be fulfilled in dreadful depressing conditions, give thought to the stilling of the storm; or to the miraculous draft of fishes after the whole night of absolute failure; or to the multiplication of the loaves and fishes when all resources were gone and disaster impended.

When dealing with the difficult people, think of Mary Magdalene or of the woman at the well; or of Zacchaeus; or of the Good Thief whose faith and reward were so great.

Supposing we are assaulted, think then of the spitting in the face of Jesus or the pulling of his beard, or the countless other outrages. Unite our plight to his in faith, and at once he is united to our condition. The wonderful union of the Mystical Body operates whereby we suffer his sufferings, and at the same time draw his merits into ourselves.

We must not think that by this union of our state with his or with Mary's, we will exempt ourselves from inconvenience. We must not imagine that the arrangement is a one-sided transaction of temporal benefit to ourselves. No, it may indeed be that we will be involved in the fate of Jesus and Mary. But if that were to be the case, we could parody an expression of the Great St Teresa: 'O happy that legionary of Mary!'

I must make a final connection. My remarks have had relation to the legionary work. Now I must link them with the meeting, and especially with the act of reporting. For this is our major defect, our weak spot. It is grave by reason of its part in the Legion system. The Legion stands upon the meeting, and the meeting stands on the report. Legionaries may have done a wonderful job, but listen to the tale so often told at the meeting. Without animation, voice low, words colourless, suggesting lack of interest or the performance of a pure routine. That report is not plus, it is minus. It is a betrayal of the good work done.

So what association of ideas must be invoked to put life into that sorry performance? The handbook reminds us that Mary would not be wanting in that direction when it was her duty to speak. And what of Our Lord himself? 'Never did man speak as he speaks,' was the bystanders' comment on Our Lord's projection of himself. Did the apostles go forth in a listless, lifeless, unconvincing way to bring the message to the world?

The Holy Ghost uses even the humblest well-intentioned behaviour to convey his power. Words, being the expression of our soul and intellect, are his favourite vehicle. The report is supposed to be the image of our work. So it would be a pity to restrict the Holy Spirit by placing shoddy speech at his disposal. It is not reasonable



to expect that divine communications will flow through it. Nor would it be according to his common law.

## The Patricians

Catholics never speak about religion to those outside the Church and seldom to those inside it. A term has been devised in France to describe this Christian disorientation: Mutism. In his book on the Church, Msgr Suenens expresses this poignant thought: 'It is said that those outside the Church will not listen. But the real truth is that the Catholics will not speak.' Our two envoys, journeying out to Brazil last year, were the only people on the great liner who talked to others on religion. Two Catholic members of the crew told them that on their voyages a constant barrage of questions and objections poured in on them which they were not equipped to answer. This is grimly tragic. We must charitably suppose that the bulk of those questions proceeded from people who were seeking truth. They were not going to learn it from those Catholics!

Recently some of us stayed in a little town with a population one third Catholic. We were informed that in the one and only public house the Protestants had of late been asking questions about Catholicism. We inquired if they got the answers. No. Grim again!

And readers will remember the case, described in a 'Cameo' in this Journal (*Maria Legionis*) some years ago, of the very distinguished old lady who had mixed all her life with 'good Catholics' and who declared in her 96th year that not one of them had ever tried to convert her. She regarded this as odd from people who appeared to believe. But can the word 'odd' be appropriately applied to what is universal?

### **'Mutism' is the Prevalent Evil**

It seems to be the startling fact that the average Catholic will not help another in the domain of religious knowledge! 'Mutism' is the prevalent evil.

Is it that we have not got the faith? No, we have it, and have it abundantly. Is it that we are indifferent about the soul of our neighbour? No, because we do feel for him and pray for him. Is it that we repudiate the idea of conversion? No, for our hearts glow in us at the very mention of someone entering the Church.

Then what is the explanation of the anomaly? Here is it in the words of one who had just attended his first Patrician meeting; was stirred by what he had seen; and was pouring out his mind to Fr Aedan McGrath on the subject: 'Why have they not got this everywhere? I have been through all my schooling and have learned my catechism as well as the next. But I could not have answered one of those questions which I have heard discussed. And yet I realise that they are all simple questions. I feel I don't know how to say anything.'

It would seem that the majority of our people are unaccustomed to argue, or even to think coherently, about religion, or to explain any less simple point in connection with it. Many could repeat those words: 'I don't know



how to say anything.' Obviously such persons will hide their ignorance by an unapostolic silence, and will wither under assault.

### **The Remedy is the Patricians**

The remedy? Here again I quote Fr Aedan McGrath: 'The priests here are thrilled at the possibilities offered by the Patricians.' So I discuss with you the Patricians.

It is a society controlled by the Legion of Mary. Each branch must be run by a praesidium and the Chairman must be an active legionary. A praesidium could have charge of more than one branch of the Patricians. The name is in the tradition of legionary Latinity. It is derived from the Patricians of ancient Rome, who were the upper of the three grades of society i.e. the Patricians, the Plebs, the Slaves. Our Patricians would hope to combine all social grades into one spiritual nobility. But let us carry the idea of the name a little further. Each old time Patrician had as his clients some families of the Plebs to whom he was to be a guide, protector, counsellor. Our Patricians are bidden to aspire to a like relation to the general body of the people.

Moreover, the Patricians were supposed to be especially full of love of their country and of responsibility for its welfare. And so, our Patricians must be supporters of their spiritual fatherland, the Church. Catholics who cannot be broadly inserted into that category, may not be members of our Patricians. Similarly, non-Catholics cannot attend its meetings, though they may be friendly to the Church and even journeying towards it.

The wider aim of the Patricians is a mass mobilising of the Catholics. For this, one branch in a parish would not be enough. Each section of the people would need to have one.

## **To Inform Catholics**

The immediate object is the equipping of those like the two seamen on that liner, or like the shrinking Catholics in that village pub, or like the thousands who never attempted to convert the 95-year-old lady! It will seek to give the answers: to teach the people to explain themselves: to cure Mutism: to solve the doubts of the multitude: to supply a reasonable basis to the faith that is in us.

But the cautious school may wonder; 'Is it right to raise doubts in people's minds?' The doubts are already in minds, but without answers. Every objection to religion is there, spontaneously generated or suggested from outside. And even if the objections were not there, it might be necessary to inject them on the principle of inoculation. These are no days for Catholic 'Babes in the Wood'!

## **The Patrician Meeting**

The rules of the Patricians prescribe a monthly meeting. Each meeting begins with prayers.<sup>1</sup> Then a talk or paper by a lay person, not to last longer than 15 minutes; followed by general discussion. Then, one hour after the opening time, the discussion is suspended for 15 minutes, during which a cup of tea or other refreshment is served. Then follows a talk by a priest, of duration 15 minutes. This need not necessarily adhere to the theme proposed by the first talk, but it should be in line with the aims of the Patricians as stated above. Then follows further discussion lasting nearly half an hour; that is until five minutes before the end. Then announcements and final prayer, which is the Legion prayer: 'Confer on us, O Lord....' The blessing of the priest concludes the meeting.

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1 The Patrician Prayer follows this chapter.

The total length of the meeting is to be two hours. Proper time keeping is essential, it has been found that those giving the principal talks tend to go beyond their allotted time. This is serious, in view of the fact that the discussion time is correspondingly lessened.

It is not obligatory that a member shall attend every meeting. As the meetings are only monthly, a system of reminding members will be necessary. The meetings should possess the elements of attractiveness, including those of light, temperature, etc. Smoking is permitted. Expenses are to be met by a 'Secret Bag' collection. A statement of accounts should be read out to the meeting. The subject of discussion should be determined in advance and notice of it given.

The best number for a branch is 70 or 80. A larger number becomes difficult to handle, especially in regard to the tea or refreshment session which is important. The idea here is not at all that of coming to the rescue of exhausted persons. It is a striking of the social note – important for a gathering of the Patrician type. Incidentally it loosens tongues. It has been suggested that the cup of tea be omitted but the 'free and easy' interlude retained. In practice it would be found difficult to justify that break without specific reason. The tea etc. supplies an adequate reason, but it should be ultra-simple, just a cup of tea with biscuits or bread. The tea interval is one of the features that give 'personality' to the Patricians.

*Setting.* The theatre effect, i.e. players and audience, is to be avoided. In a hall, face sideways, not lengthways. Behind the table, have two rows of seats. Among those seated in the front row are the principals, e.g. the priest and the chairman. In front of the table arrange the remainder of the seats in semi-circular rows. This means



that those in them are not looking at a mere platform group but at a family circle; one addresses the family.

On the table is the Legion altar, not including the Vexillum.

### **Parliamentary Procedure**

The role of the Chairman is similar to that of the 'speaker' in a parliament, that is, of minimum intervention. The discussion follows the method of a parliament, that is, by successive comments from different persons. It is not to be a classroom. Lecturing people teaches them little. In one description of the Patricians I have seen the phrase 'controlled discussion'. This sounds a false note, as suggesting that people are being dexterously steered along a pre-arranged path. It would be destructive of the Patrician idea if that impression were conveyed. So let naturalness and freedom be the atmosphere, though of course some regulation is necessary. The chairman should not be officious in regard to irrelevancy, provided it does not harden into a wrong road. Beware of descending on persons with rebukes, corrections or calls to order, which would only have the effect of shutting up those whose participation is the most desired. Silence would be the Patrician poison. Individuals should not be grilled for 'heresy'.

Contributions are to be brief and the Chairman must see to this. But members are not limited to one intervention. There are to be no votes of thanks.

Throughout the series of meetings, there should be a quiet insistence on the Catholic duty of apostleship, but there should be no pressing of people into the Catholic societies. The opposite extreme is likewise to be avoided, that is, of refraining from attempts to recruit in incidental conversations.

## **Not a Lecture System**

Real problems should be dealt with – not academic topics. The true objective should be kept in view. One programme recently submitted showed how the latter can be lost sight of. The whole series concerned itself with the family. At succeeding sessions, a doctor, nurse, solicitor, policeman etc. treated the subject from his own professional aspect. That and the resulting discussion would be useful, but it would not be the *Patricians* as will be seen from a reading of this article.

The purpose of the *Patricians* is not that of duplicating the ordinary methods of religious instruction, that is the sermon, the lecture, the catechism class. These provide for one expert person, doing most of the work. They furnish a ready-made and admirable solution which is received with varying degrees of inertness and assimilation.

Definitely there is not in the mind of the ordinary Catholic a competent understanding of religion. He has a lot of knowledge, but it is not sufficiently built together. It is a little like the case of a builder's yard in which lie in separate heaps all the materials for a house, but which are not the house and have no proportion to a house. It is not knowledge which the owner is comfortable or convinced about to the extent of going out to talk about it, to do battle for it. That is the problem. The *Patricians* must try to adapt itself to it. It must not be the lecture system or an approximation to it. In the sense the two ideas are at opposite poles.

The *Patrician* method postpones authoritative solution and throws the problem on to the shoulders of the average man. How does this work out?

## The Building-Up Process

Suppose the first contributor to the discussion is the comparatively unfitted person who would never have thought of defending his faith except with his fists. And let us further suppose that his remarks are typical of him, that is to say, inadequate from every point of view – subject matter and presentation. Let us assign it as low a value as five per cent. But that five per cent stirs up ferment in minds. Each one present feels correctly that he could do as well – or rather better. Because that first five per cent has taught the others something. Raised to that five per cent level, they see things a little more clearly and at once a second speaker enters the lists with another five per cent. Therein he accepts as his own the first contribution and builds on it. A third speaker interposes in the same spirit and a fourth and so on. Each, so to speak, stands on the shoulders of his predecessors but gives them little credit; his own has been the significant contribution! Note that things have become quite complicated psychologically. Not only is their idea building, but each step is done in such slow motion and indeed painfully by simple mental processes, that all keep in line with it, including those who have not actually spoken. If the building goes too fast, or is too compressed, many will be left behind.

Secondly, by virtue of the fact that each speaker is included to minimise the part played by others and to exaggerate the worth of his own share, he will have an ‘ownership interest’ in the final result. As a consequence he would be enthusiastic and propagandist about it.

Thirdly, there has been the ideal preparation for the propagating of what has been learned. There has been a battle, blow and counter-blow, suggestion, criticism, contradiction, one idea working on another, item added to item, until the



total knowledge of the body has been pooled – and that is necessarily considerable. Then, on account of having been through that battle, everyone has the confidence to go outside the meeting and reproduce it at the corner, in the pub, and elsewhere. That is the Patrician idea!

Fourthly, the mode of expression of most of those who speak is attuned to the comprehension of those who listen. This is a vital factor. It is odd how penetration into each higher stratum of education puts us mentally out of touch with those below it! Even when one is trying to talk most simply, it is possible to be out of reach of some. Recently I was given a list of words which would not be understood by a whole section of the population and yet I think that most of us would be found using those words in the delusion that they were conveying our ideas! This points to the need for a ‘milling’ or interpreting process which will make sure that the ‘loftier’ ideas and words will be ground down and made intelligible to all. In the Patricians we are already able to see this digestive process at work. Difficult ideas are proposed and then ‘milled’ by successive speakers into the simplicity that all necessary religious ideas are supposed to possess.

### **Minimum Platform Intervention**

From all that has been said, it will be seen that it is vital that there should not be any ‘short-circuiting’ from the ‘platform’. If what I may call a ‘cellophane’ solution is provided right away by authority, the roots of further discussion are struck at; that elaborate psychological process is eliminated; the Patrician system has been perverted. Gone also is the attractiveness of the whole procedure; nobody will want to attend a penny-in-the-slot performance.

Even when something very incorrect is stated, it should not at once be challenged by the platform. It should be left sailing on the sea of discussion. It is certain that before the end it will have met its due fate at the hands of the audience. If it should survive as real error, the priest can deal with it in his remarks, but as gently as possible, avoiding a personal pointing. No one will talk if he has the consciousness that someone in authority is lying in wait to denounce him.

### **Freedom of Speech**

The special characteristic must be freedom of speech – compatible of course with our definition of the word ‘Patrician,’ i.e. *supporters* of the Church, not hostile elements. If awkward things are being thought and said in ordinary life, it is essential that they be brought up and dealt with. Otherwise they will only fester and destroy.

There is no need for worry if some important issue remained in unsatisfactory unsettlement at a meeting; or if many points arose which were not dealt with. Remember that the Patricians is a series; there will be a next meeting! In fact it is a good thing that each meeting should not be self-contained, complete in itself. Thereby interest will be enhanced. It may be desirable to continue a discussion to the next meeting.

The meetings of the Patricians which I have attended were impressive. So much was got home, so much interest created, that each single meeting would have justified itself. I could sense its beneficial impulses going out and circulating in the community. It seems to me that the force of a series of such meetings would be irresistible – like the battering-ram against the wall. If the Catholic people could be mobilised into such a battering-ram the

energy would be prodigious, even to the converting of the world. For it is not the grace of God which is lacking but our co-operation.

### Patrician Prayer

*(To be recited by all in unison, standing)*

In the name of the Father, etc.  
Beloved Lord,  
bless the Society of the *Patricians*  
into which we have entered  
for the purpose of drawing closer to you  
and to Mary, your mother, who is our mother  
also.

Aid us to the knowing of our Catholic faith,  
so that its transforming truths may be  
operative in our lives.

Help us also to an understanding of your  
intimate union with us,  
By which we not only live in you, but also  
depend upon each other,  
in such manner that if some relax, others  
suffer and may perish.

Enable us to glimpse the weighty but glorious  
burden which is thereby laid upon us,  
and to yearn to bear it for you.

We realise the kind of people we are:  
the reluctance of our nature:

How unfitted we are to offer our shoulders to  
you.

Yet we have confidence that you will regard  
our faith  
rather than our frailty,



and the necessities of your work  
Rather than the inadequacy of the  
instruments.  
So, uniting our voice with the maternal  
pleadings of Mary,  
we beg from your Heavenly Father and from  
you the gift of the Holy Spirit:  
to abide with us:  
to teach us your life-giving doctrine:  
to supply all things that are needful to us.  
Grant, too, that having been bounteously  
endowed,  
we may generously give:  
for otherwise the world may not receive the  
fruits  
of your Incarnation and most cruel death.  
Oh do not let labour and suffering so great be  
wasted. Amen  
In the name of the Father, etc.

Servant of God Frank Duff was born in Dublin on 7 June 1889. His first publication was 'Can we be Saints' in 1916. He founded the Legion of Mary on 7 September 1921. He retired from the Irish Civil Service in 1934 to devote his time to the Legion. He was invited to attend the Second Vatican Council in 1965 as a lay observer. He died on 7 November 1980.

