

## Rome and Its Legions

Of late we have been striking a note strongly in the Legion. It is the one of total mobilisation. Such a possibility has been opened up by the tendency towards a general acceptance of the legionary ideas and by the swelling of our ranks. But one thing we must not lose sight of when we thus appeal for great numbers is the element of quality. Greater numbers must not mean for us any process of dilution, a mixing of water with wine. We must get the numbers and at the same time we must not only maintain quality but aim determinedly at driving it up. In this respect the history of the Legion has been rather interesting. It has shown that we have been able to gain numbers without losing quality. Such works as the *Peregrinatio Pro Christo* afford remarkable demonstration of that fact. It would seem that if our leaders preserve that idea of constantly pushing up standards – after the manner that one would mount a flight of stairs, every step upwards and onwards – there is no height to which that quality cannot attain.

I talk to you on the subject of quality and strength in the Legion. In the handbook there are a number of

items which endeavour to justify the Legion's choice of its name.

An impressive reference appears on page 5 of the more recent edition of the handbook. It is from the Epistle of St Clement to the Corinthians. Its force proceeds in part from the eminence of its author. St Clement was the third Pope. He was a convert of St Peter and a fellow worker of St Paul. He belonged to the purely apostolic era. The things which he spoke were obviously taught by the apostles. He holds the Roman Legion up to the early Christians as the model for the Church – a conclusive endorsement of our use of the name. He regarded it as sowing a headline to the Christians of order, discipline, unit, obedience, loyalty and courage. Then in a most interesting continuation in his next chapter he goes on to liken that closely bound human machine to the Mystical Body itself.

Another handbook reference is to the Roman legionaries on Calvary. You will recollect that quotation from Bolo which shows those legionaries as fulfilling a very mixed role:

- Executioners and then believers;
- Scoffers finishing as adorers;
- Persecutors destined to become propagators of the Christian faith.

They had dressed Our Lord up in regal purple. They had put a crown of thorns on his head and a reed in his hand as a sceptre and they had mocked him as a king. Therein they were expressing a truth which they did not comprehend, but which their successors would grasp and enforce later on when Rome became Christian. They would cause Jesus Christ to be acknowledged as King.

At the foot of the Cross they gambled for the garment which they had stripped from him. They would not tear it up. The teachers of the Church tell us that this was a pointing to the future in which Rome would keep intact the garment of doctrine which the Mystical Body wears.

They put a label over his head also and that label was wiser than they knew. It proclaimed Jesus of Nazareth to be King of the Jews, a truth if ever there was a truth.

They pierced the Lord's side with a spear bringing forth the symbolic water and blood: and after his death they presided over his burial. It was by the permission of Pilate that Our Lord's body was saved from the place of disgraceful burial and was given the shelter of a worthy, princely tomb. Pilate set his seal upon the rock which closed it and the Roman soldiers kept constant guard over it. Their watching was a guarantee of the truth of the Resurrection.

The whole thing is a study in opposites. Bolo says that on Calvary the Romans were unconsciously inaugurating the everlasting destiny of Rome in the Church. But the role of Rome began much further back. Before the Romans or the Jews had ever become nations, seven hundred years before Rome was even founded, the eye of Balaam, the Prophet, had pierced the future and seen the Roman fleet setting out to invade and conquer Judea. Fifteen hundred years in advance, he saw the Romans fulfilling their ordained part as told in the ancient prophecy of Genesis (49:10): that the Messiah would come when the sceptre, that is sovereignty, had departed from Judea (Numbers 24:24).

The chronology of that distant period is not precise, but it would appear that the final conquest of Judea was soon (perhaps immediately) followed by the birth of

Mary, the woman foretold in Genesis. That event was the commencement of the Redemption.

Also it was a Roman Decree which ordered the census and drew the Holy Family to Bethlehem causing Our Lord to be born in that town. This brought about the fulfilment of the prophecy which said that Christ would be born in Bethlehem. Otherwise he would have been born in Nazareth. Again this seemingly unconnected action of Rome prepares and ordains the circumstances of Our Lord's coming and mission. And may we not see in the Roman officials who presided at the census, the representatives of the white race, leaving the Magi to stand for the other great racial divisions, i.e. the Asiatic, Indian and Negro?

The Jews had not the legal right to put Our Lord to death. The power to inflict capital punishment had been taken from them by the Romans, so that they had to proceed through Pilate. Thus Pilate and his legionaries were the ministers of the Passion and Death of Christ. Therefore the connection between Rome and Christ did not begin on Calvary, but ages before, in fact in the mind of God in eternity.

After Calvary, the Romans served another strange purpose. Having carried out the sentence inflicted on Christ by the Jews, the Romans next executed the condemnation pronounced by Christ on the Jews. They crucified the Jews as they had crucified Our Lord. It is understood that one million Jews were destroyed by Titus in the year 70. 'Not a stone shall be left upon a stone' was the word of Our Lord and the Romans brought it to pass. In the universal ruin the Temple was torn down and the now meaningless sacrifice was finally abolished.



Then 300 years of war followed between Christ and Caesar in which Christ was persecuted in the Christians. That stage was terminated by the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in the year 313. Having become a Christian he set himself to turn the Empire into Christianity and as the liturgy says, Rome that had been mistress of error became the teacher of truth. Roman armies became the maintainer of Christian order; Roman law became the foundation of Christian law; and all the Roman institutions became propagators and channels of Christianity.

In its Christian phase the Empire was called the Holy Roman Empire. The uprise of Protestantism deprived it of reality, but it survived as a legal fiction till 1920 when the Treaty of Versailles struck it finally off the Statute Book. That was about the time when the Legion of Mary was born. At the least this forms an intriguing coincidence. 'God fulfils himself in many ways,' as Tennyson says.

The coming of the Legion means that once again the Church of Rome had an army to protect it and spread it. This force and its arms are not of the world, its warfare is spiritual. The success of that new army is before all eyes to see. It is portentous. It suggests itself to the mind as something which cannot be refused that the old Roman Legion symbolised and modelled our own, and was so regarded in the designs of Providence. If so what an unutterable joy it would be to think that Our Blessed Lord looked down from the Cross on the Roman legionaries and through them contemplated their successors in title. Let us hope that he thought about them with some degree of comfort. But note it would only be in a vast numerical development, such as the Legion forms and which we are now considering, that it would be possible to reach out to

every soul in the whole world. And this is precisely what Our Lord commanded on Mount Olivet.

And now I draw a further lesson. Does it not follow that if the Roman Legion was the foreshadowing of the Legion of Mary, then the qualities of the Roman legionaries were meant to be a pattern for us? If their indomitable courage and discipline played such a part in spreading the Church over Europe, surely no less quality would be required by Our Lord from us; all the more so as we have in our boldness assumed the name of his mother?

So I take up that question of courage and strength. The Legion is insistent on that strength in every form. The Legion without courage would be a ridiculous opposite to what it is meant to be. So courage must be shown in every department of its activity. It will be chiefly moral courage, but not that alone. China in a big way showed that torture and death were included in our charter. Since then those dreaded things have become common in the Legion. It is plain that our warfare is meant to have no limits and that the Legion is not for weaklings. All the time announcements come of violent death in the line of Legion duty.

That courage must be found in everything that the Legion touches. It must be found in its prayer and devotion, where it must be manifested in ways that cost people something. Otherwise devotion would be a spineless thing. Our courage must be plainly shown by performance in difficulties, under ridicule, in illness, in exhaustion, against temptations of every kind. Especially it will be revealed in the holding on to Christian principle in all circumstances. All around us however, little we may realise it, are opportunities for absolute heroism in that department. How many will stand up for principles

against mockery and catch-cries? See the way men are browbeaten into improper courses by the clever villainy of a few using such epithets as 'yellow,' 'traitor' and the like. These shout loudly and cow the decent majority which unfortunately has not that quality of strength to stand up even against a handful. If they did fight they would easily prevail. Scripture itself assures us that the violent bear away the Kingdom of Heaven. Even on earth one has to be strongly assertive on behalf of good. The bold ones win the day always but usually the field is left to the wrong elements.

The legionary attitude must be that of rising superior to the baser forces; of excelling in whatever we take up; of being courageously helpful; of showing true Christian qualities, even at the gravest cost to ourselves. In our ranks we see that quality being copiously produced. Take the recent case of Donal Brady, who had brought his whole family into the Legion. He was a victim in that military air crash at Shannon a while ago (January 1961). There were five young officers in the plane. In the crash Donal and the pilot were thrown out clear of the plane. The pilot was stunned and unable to arise. We do not know how hurt Donal was, but his only thought was of the three who were still in the plane, now a blazing inferno. He climbed back into the plane in an effort to rescue his companions. He and they perished. His epitaph was composed long ago by his Master: 'Greater love than this no man hath that he lay down his life for another.' But such is the superb quality which should be forthcoming from every legionary. Baptism has implanted it but it must be patiently cultivated and elicited. We slowly learn the Christian principles and are taught to put them into practice. After a while they establish themselves as our



motives. At that stage we will not be found wanting if a high summons comes.

It should be our ambition as the poet puts it, 'to guide the whirlwind and ride the storm'. To do this will require strength, a strength which does not concentrate on consequences. For our very existence it is necessary for us to be positive. If we aim at less, we will be negative. This means that we will lose our nerve in emergencies, being a danger and not an inspiration to others.

It is our tendency to let our imagination darken a prospect so that we draw back from it. What is merely inconvenient is seen as difficult and the difficult of course as impossible. All have their own special weak spots. Some are more intimidated by a fear of scenes or ridicule than by a grave danger which can surround itself with a sort of glamour. Therefore it is necessary to subject ourselves to a system such as the Legion which will measure up situations from the point of holy necessity and which will shrink neither from the real peril nor from what is merely distasteful. Perhaps the latter is the more formidable because it is more common.

Once upon a time a quaint piece of advice was given to legionaries at a Congress. It was that to achieve their objectives they should go out and get themselves laughed at – which of course presupposes that our objects and our methods are not absurd ones. There is philosophy there. It requires strength to stand up to that vicious jeering which is so lavishly distributed when someone sets out to do the right but unpopular thing. But holy strength nourishes itself upon itself and eventually cannot be resisted.

You know the phrase of the Curé d'Ars which is quoted for you so often: 'The world belongs to him who loves it most and who proves that love.' We could, I think, say



with equal truth that the completely determined person can move the world and unfortunately this principle helps the wicked as much as it helps the good. Take an episode which has affected every page of the world's history since it took place. In 1917 the Germans conceived an idea in their war with Russia. With a view to creating disorder and smashing the war effort, they let loose in Russia a number of captured Communists, among them Lenin. This manoeuvre succeeded perfectly. It tuned in with the seething discontent of Russia which had been aggravated by military failure.

Lenin's vehement organisation carried all before it. Every dissatisfied element in the country joined him and the Russian Revolution took place on lines similar to that of the French Revolution; indeed it was the French Revolution in delayed action. It took the same course. It executed the members of the Royal family and it set itself to crush out religion. Eventually Russia, which had always been regarded as one of the most instinctively religious countries, was not only deprived of its faith but turned into an instrument for destroying faith. It was Russia that transformed Karl Marx's dream into an awakening, into that reality which menaces the world today. It was Lenin, working through a comparatively small group of men, who made Russia communistic.

Such is the power of the few when moved by a sufficient motive, whether good or bad. Part of that immensity of influence is derived from the fact that God helps the good and the devil helps the bad, but there is also a psychological process at work which should not be overlooked. It is akin to the scientific fact that an inert mass is responsive to any force which is applied to it. Take for instance a great liner ready to set out on

its ocean voyage. Usually it does not start on its own engines but is pulled out to open water by a tug. The latter is a tiny ridiculous object beside a gigantic liner, but it sets itself to pull and there is a great scurry and a foam of water. For a while there seems to be no result but then the great ship begins to yield and soon it is slipping along at the pace dictated by the little craft. There is your picture of an immense inert body made a prey of by a little force. Every general population everywhere is a potential victim for some dominating influence. Of what kind is that influence going to be?

Take a slightly different case which would approximate more closely to the ordinary situation. Suppose there are two tugs pulling the liner in opposite directions. This would mean that for a long time there would be no motion. The two contrary forces would seem to cancel each other out. But we know that at some time this inertia will end. It is certain that one of the tugs will be ever so slightly stronger than the other and it will take possession. So it is in the affairs of the world. The two tugs are the forces of good and evil, which struggle for the mastery over whole populations and the battle will go to the stronger.

But of what nature is that strength? It does not lie in numbers alone because John Sobieski in the Battle of Vienna with 25,000 men destroyed the power of Mohammedanism forever on land and Lenin with a handful of helpers turned the world upside down. Nor does it lie in personal virtue alone, as the fate of the martyrs show. Nor in the justice of a cause because our cause suffered glorious defeat in China. The fact is that strength is a combination of numbers and personal qualities and good system. If any one of these is omitted the combination is destroyed and both nature and grace

are impeded. We cannot afford this if we are fighting a powerful enemy.

This brings us back again to that assembly of virtues which characterised the Roman Legion and enabled it to overcome the world. We must try to make those qualities assertive in our Legion. We can do this almost as a matter of routine by fitting in perfectly to all the simple requirements of our system which Pope John XXIII has been kind enough to describe as a most excellent system.

But let there be no picking and choosing in that system. It will not do to honour Mary and at the same time be negligent in items of duty. Nor will it do to work heroically without understanding the roots of our service. Nor to have the faith that moves mountains without being dependable. Nor to feel overwhelmed with love of God but unprepared to give him to others. These are gaps in the Christian armour which are only too common and which bring defeat. But granted that full balance of things which we believe to exist in the Legion system I think that we will be found possessed of that quality of strength which cannot be pent up. For remember that God will enter in if he finds something which is responsive to him and will perhaps enable our Legion to repeat in the spiritual order no less conquest than that effected by the Roman Legion in the physical order.

To stimulate ourselves towards that superhuman programme let us revert to the thought that when Our Blessed Lord looked down from his Cross on the Roman legionaries, he must inevitably have seen, through them, their successors in title – yourselves – the Legion of his most Blessed Mother Mary.

## The Religion of Protestants

If Protestants are asked where they get their religion from, their unhesitating answer will be that they have got it from the Bible; and this they sincerely believe. But in thinking so, they are mistaken. They get their religion mainly from their classroom just the same as we do. We take it logically from that quarter, because our classrooms are the voice of the Church. They, illogically.

In those classrooms of ours, from the dawn of education, we receive the official teaching of the Catholic Church and we firmly hold that the Church is divinely authorised to deliver that material to us.

The Protestants who receive religious education enter their classrooms as we do at an early age. There they are taught much of the authentic Christianity. Then they take up the Bible and they are convinced that they find it there. But in fact they do not get it from the Bible. That is proved by the fact that if persons ignorant of the traditional Christian teaching read the Bible, there is



no knowing what they will make out of what they find there.

It is to be noted that the Bible consists not merely of the New Testament but of the Old Testament as well. Both of these books are difficult and to a large extent they are contradictory of each other. That is necessarily the case where the one is being largely superseded by the other.

If it is the position that we have a very difficult collection of documents with that principle of apparent contradiction in them, it is inevitable that he who proceeds to interpret them for himself – that is anyone who separates himself from the Church – has set his feet in the path of confusion, no matter how safe he may think he has made himself. The Bible itself assures him to that effect: 'Understand this first, that no prophecy of scripture is made by private interpretation' (2 Pt 1:20); and again that all the scriptures 'contain things hard to be understood which the unlearned and the unstable twist to their own destruction' (2 Pt 3:16).

### **The Orthodox Church and the Councils**

Let us go back in history to a previous example of a mass departure from the Church. The Eastern Church, popularly called the Orthodox Church, may be said to have parted company with us about the year 1054. That calamity arose out of various disputes. The main issue at stake was the repudiation of the Pope, but they did not want to repudiate Catholic doctrine. Their problem was to find a formula by which they could, while getting rid of the papacy, still keep themselves, as they wished, built upon a solid rock. The formula which they devised was that of receiving all the Christian doctrine as defined by the Great Councils. This was a plausible rule of faith,

because at that time it seemed the position then was much as it might seem to us to be clarified except perhaps one or two things. Our Lady's mediation – well that has to be defined! But really everything else is settled!

Thinking along those lines, the Easterns argued: If we hold onto the Great Councils, we are safe. But thereby they were reasoning themselves into disaster. Because instead of nearly everything having been defined, there lay ahead what might be called an explosion of heresies. The vexed points which the future contained were no less numerous than those of the past. Orthodoxy had no effective way of dealing with these new heresies. When Protestantism arrived, it charged the Orthodox with inconsistency in claiming to receive only what was laid down by the Great Councils, whereas in actual fact they believed such doctrines as the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Our Lady, neither of which had been defined and which indeed have only been defined in our own times.

That logic hit the Orthodox Church with staggering force. The result was that gradually it abandoned belief in those two great doctrines – as well as others – which from the beginning it had been conspicuous in proclaiming and defending. Thus their safe formula only turned out to be a noose for their own hurt.

### **Protestantism and the Bible**

Protestantism in its turn wanted a rock on which, while dispensing with the papacy, it would rest secure. Its founders thought that in the Bible they had a rule of faith firm enough to support them, yet giving them the liberty that they wanted. With the Catholic teachings fresh in their minds, they looked at the Bible and they saw most of

those teachings there, as they thought. But that was where they were mistaken, because the fact is that no documents, whether the Bible or any others, can render the full Faith. The living voice of the Church alone can solve these recurring problems. And not even the Church itself can on paper provide for the future. With seeming precision it defines a question. Yet later on some novel aspect presents itself and demands attention. Nothing but the continuing living Authority can deal with the extraordinary human capacity to find flaws and work out new errors.

In facing the phenomenon of Protestantism, it is imperative to proceed on the basis that the great majority of them are sincere. For if they are not, why enter into logical argument about Protestantism at all? It would be wasting time to discuss the subject.

The original Protestants wanted to break with Rome, but they fully realised that a pillar of truth must exist around which people could assemble. They thought that the Bible would serve as that pillar. From their separatist point of view, it seemed to be ideal. It had authority as the Word of God, and to their eyes it expressed the traditional Christian teaching. So their formula was to make the Bible the sole rule of faith. Incidentally they slurred over a rather important circumstance, namely that the Bible had only just become available to the people. This was through the discovery of printing in the year 1442, which means that for fourteen hundred years the Bible had not been available to the multitude. But even if it had been, the multitude could not read it. However, the Reformers do not seem to have given much or any attention to that vital fact, although according to their own theory it meant that Christendom had been from its beginning until then without a practical rule of faith.

In any case the formula did not work. From the first moment the unsuitability of the Bible as a sole rule of faith was shown. The Reformers themselves – the very first wave of them – disputed radically on primary things. The process of fissuring or dividing up began and it has ended in the situation which faces us today. It would be a fair paraphrase of their doctrine of individual private judgement that every Protestant is his own Church. He determines his own religion. He takes up the Scriptures influenced by that tendency which I have mentioned of reading into them his own earlier education. Then by an inevitable process of adaptation and evolution, something is worked out which is different as between man and man. The result is that outside the Church there is not what can be genuinely called a religion.

Recent returns suggest that in Great Britain only two million non-Catholics attend a Divine Service on a Sunday.

In the USA it is alleged that there are one thousand sects, each one asserting that it got its doctrine from the Bible, but even inside the sects there would be fundamental differences.

Nor do things stand still. It is the property of effort to gather momentum and to multiply its forms, to complicate itself. I have shown how the Orthodox Church was compelled by its own insufficient formula to abandon doctrines which it had held from the first. The same inexorable process has accomplished itself in Protestantism. As Karl Adams puts it: 'Wide tracts of Luther's thought were simply Catholic. The people who eliminated those Catholic elements from his message were the Lutheran theologians of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.'



## **Jehovah Witnesses**

Many are the fantastic doctrines now promulgated by the different sects, but for each and every one of them Holy Writ is quoted as the source and justification. The doctrine of private judgement has ended by producing children that are monstrosities.

In this order something which is really quite portentous has of late taken place. It is the emerging of the Jehovah Witnesses. They represent a startling manifestation. They repudiate the principal Christian doctrines: the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Divinity of Christ, Hell, and all the sacraments indeed except Baptism, which by the way has to be performed by immersion. All this would seem to us to be a total shipwreck of Christianity, but they do not see it so; they insist that their hotchpotch is taken faithfully from the Bible. In this assertion we are presented with something of capital importance. When we are examining into it, I urge that we do not take the easy way out of saying that they are a gang of twisters or morons. No doubt like all collections of men, including ourselves, they have their weak ones among them. But we must, no less than in the case of the Protestants, give them credit for being in the main sincere. If you meet many of them, you will have that conclusion forced upon you.

It is certain that they are making a shattering impact on general Protestantism. Nearly all of those who are going around promoting the strange beliefs of that creed are converts from the ordinary Protestant divisions. In leaving those sects to become Jehovah Witnesses, they are convinced that they have taken a dynamic upward step.

Note the important position therefore: They are sincere. They are intelligent. They are seeking the truth. They

take up the Bible in the absolute assurance that they will find the truth there. Yet that extraordinary programme of denial of everything that we regard as essential Christianity is the result.

The Jehovah Witnesses are a challenge to everybody who values Christianity, a summons to think and take stock. For they represent the coming to hideous, fatal maturity of a wrong principle. Now let us turn from those people to the Anglicans, who of all the sections of Protestantism, come nearest to ourselves, having most of our doctrines. Some of them have every doctrine except the Pope. So there is one end of the scale and the Jehovah Witnesses is the other end. The North Pole and the South Pole could not be further apart. Yet each of them is declaring that it gets its religion from the scriptures!

Not only that North Pole and that South Pole, but all the innumerable shadings and contradictory sets of doctrines which come in between, are found believing that they have found them in the Bible. Which proves the Bible as a substitute for the Rock of Peter is as inefficacious as the Great Councils – in fact much more so.

The scriptures were never divinely intended to be a Catechism, but a record of things done and said, as St Luke informs us in the first few lines of his gospel.

There is of course throughout the New Testament a good deal of doctrine set out in a sketchy way, and this sketchy way is just what causes the trouble. It results in the scriptures forming a sort of mirror for our own minds, reflecting back to us the beliefs that we hold. The Catholic, the Protestant and the Jehovah Witness all think they find their own creeds there.

## **A Valuable Experiment**

Many years ago an intensely valuable experiment was made in China. It arose out of the wish to find what impression was being made by the scriptures on minds which had no previous knowledge of Christianity. Let us take – it was said – a highly intelligent pagan with absolutely no background of Christianity, give him the New Testament to study and to say what he has made of it.

That experiment selected a leading intellectual, a man of great attainment. As I have said, he had no knowledge whatsoever of Christianity; it was unknown territory to him. He conscientiously fulfilled the request made of him, studied the book with extreme care, and then produced his verdict. He said: 'What is it all about? Who is this Jesus Christ? What is he up to? I cannot make head or tail of this book.'

That is an exceedingly important episode. Let not your light comment on it be: 'I do not understand that man, because I am able to see the meaning of the New Testament easily.' Of course you are when you have the secret of the whole thing. All your knowledge fits in with what is there. What you know – that is what the Church has taught you – is the key to everything that is there. Therefore the book makes sense to you.

But what happens if you are deprived and to the extent that you are deprived, of that enlightenment which proceeds ultimately from the Church? The answer is contained in that Chinese experiment. That highly intellectual specimen of the human race could make nothing out of the New Testament narrative, which is the simplest part of the Bible.

Just as the Protestant thinks he has received his doctrine from the Bible, so does he imagine that he is obeying the

prescriptions of the Bible. In fact he is not doing so. What about the Rules of the Old Testament? The Old Testament is in length the greater part of the Bible. Look through its pages and see the sort of orders and regulations with which it bristles. For instance read the minute detail in regard to eating and fasting. Among the dishes sternly prohibited to the Jews were the hare and the pig. If the modern Protestant were to observe that rule, it would interfere very much with his diet.

### **Keeping the Sabbath**

There is the question of keeping holy of the Sabbath Day. The Sabbath is Saturday. Why do Protestants observe the Sunday? It was the Church that authorised the observance of the Sunday. The Sabbath rules were drastic. They permitted work of no description. They did not permit a fire to be lit. One could not even gather sticks for a fire on that day. One must not cook a meal. The food of the Sabbath had to be prepared on the previous day. And there was even the regulation that you must not catch a flea on the Sabbath Day except that it is hurting you greatly! Nor must you walk further than six furlongs. Every seventh year there must be no sowing of the land, nor care of your vineyard. What would grow itself must not be reaped or gathered. These things are laid down with severity.

The Books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy enshrine much binding legislation of that description, all of which is ignored by the Protestants and ourselves. We logically, by the permission and instruction of the Church. But who permits the Protestants? The fact of course is that they took over the Church dispensations along with the part of Catholicism which they retained at the time of the Reformation. But as they have repudiated the authority of



the Catholic Church, what right have they to benefit by those things? They are bound in logic to go back to what is written in the Old Testament.

When you query them on these points, they explain to you that the Old Law has been set aside. Well then, how much of the Old Law? Our Lord himself said that he came to fulfil the law and not to destroy it. How does that suggestion of theirs that the Old Law has been abrogated bear on the Ten Commandments? Were these not included in the part set aside?

As justification for disregarding that code regarding eating they quote particularly the text from the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 10, verse 15 – which refers to the celebrated vision of the linen sheet let down from Heaven, and the voice declaring to St Peter that anything which was made clean was not to be regarded as common. This the Protestants interpret as annulling the whole code dealing with unclean animals, but what was really at stake at that moment was the calling of the Gentiles, and St Peter read it in that figurative sense.

Protestants also point to the Epistle of St Paul to the Colossians (Col 2:16) as justifying the alteration of the Sabbath and the abandonment of the severe regulations attaching to it. I will quote that text for you: 'Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a festival day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbaths.'

If that is the justification that they are appealing to, it could carry them very far indeed. For instance could it not be argued that it sets aside the requirement of keeping holy the day of rest or Sabbath, and that it permits one to eat and drink to any extent one likes, even to the most scandalous excess? Obviously, it could not mean the latter or the repudiation of the Sabbath. Moreover the self-same writer,

St Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 4) is peremptory as to the duty of observing the day of rest, and carefully repeats the divine words in such a fashion as to suggest that he was demanding the full Jewish rigour on the subject.

Actually the position is that the text that no man is to judge you in regard to eating and drinking or the Sabbaths refers to the fact that one is no longer bound by the old ritual governing those things, but instead by the new order established by the Church.

That is very plain to us. But what is the person who has no other authority to appeal to, to make of these different texts? One text where St Paul seems to be insisting most sternly on a rigid and Judaic observance of the Sabbath: and another text where he appears to be removing all restrictions on eating, drinking and Sunday observance?

Protestants in their study of the Bible do not see those inconsistencies. They have their own respectable way of behaving and of keeping the Sabbath which they have been brought up to. Whatever they believe and wish to do, they will find a text to justify it. The Church tells us exactly what we have to do in those cases of apparent contradictory regulations. But who tells the Protestants? They pick from what they have been traditionally taught and they give it the turn which appears right to them. It is a sincere performance but it can lead to anything and it has led to everything – even to the Jehovah Witnesses.

A while ago in *Maria Legionis*, I ventured to contend that to the mind left to itself unguided, every text in scripture is capable of rendering 50 different meanings. Fifty of course is a general term, but undoubtedly the number of possibilities is great, as proved by the Protestant variations. If the Catholic Church is put aside, you can make very much what you like of the Bible.

I have referred to the Jehovah Witnesses as a sort of explosion of denial. They seem to deny everything that we hold. Actually I would regard them as the best practical argument in existence against the Protestant rule of faith.

### **Ethel and her Antics**

Some years ago in the *Evening Herald* there was a rather humorous series about an alleged character called Ethel and her antics. She was a maid and not of the most perfect sort. It developed in the course of the narrative that she was dishonest, disobedient, disobliging, dirty, lazy, impudent, untruthful and given to breaking things. She emigrated to England and her supposed ex-employer described her departure to that land as 'Ireland's revenge for Cromwell'.

If we may harness such a joke to solemn things, we might say that the Jehovah Witnesses are likewise God's revenge for the Reformation. The Jehovah Witnesses are likewise God's Witnesses as to the fatal consequences of not hearing the Church. The Jehovah Witnesses are the confounding of those who claim that the Bible is the only teacher and that it teaches clearly, because the Jehovah Witnesses reject all established Christian doctrine and yet say that the Bible has taught them. The Jehovah Witnesses are the battering ram against the principle of private judgement, because they make it so ridiculous. They represent Protestantism taken to its logical conclusion. They represent the end of the road and the abyss comes next, that is if the Jehovah Witnesses are not themselves the abyss.

Protestants, come back into your Father's House before that abyss absorbs you.

'An abyss where life and truth and joy are swallowed up' (Shelley).

## Mary Kept Hens at Nazareth

Monsignor Alfred O'Rahilly, frequently quoted in the Legion handbook, says that we may piously believe that Our Lady kept hens at Nazareth. This is an unexpected idea. Did anyone think of it before? I cannot remember any of the countless pictures of Our Lady, which thus represented her. Yet it gently touches an important chord. For we must not imagine her as in any way removed from our condition. There is a danger of that by reason of her exalted qualities and role. She is so close to God that she cannot come any closer. To be brought any more into God would mean an incarnation, and such was not the plan of God. Mary had an altogether special part of her own to play and it was dependent on her being a pure creature.

But she was raised to the very edge of the divinity. Understanding this and seeing the uniqueness of the place assigned to her in the whole scheme of grace, we might tend towards the error of regarding her as remote from ourselves; as a lofty aloof personage who is gracious



enough to receive our petitions and generous enough to grant them. The contemplation of her as queen might make her less a mother to us. This must not be; the vital note is that of mother.

The fact is that the plunging of her into God does not remove her from our condition, but does the contrary. It brings her nearer to us. It makes her more a woman than any other woman, more a mother than any other, more human in the ideal sense of the word than the rest of mankind. This is a strange but a justified idea. She is more loving, solicitous, understanding, than any other woman of all time. She combines things, which are usually opposites. She is set above the angels and occupies the throne beside her son, but she is the humble maid. She is mother and yet she is virgin. She has the brightest intellect, but she is the simplest person of all. She was united to the Holy Trinity. She was Queen of the Angels, of the entire universe, of all men – but she kept hens!

### **Not Merely a Hobby**

This idea gives us a right perspective on her life. Let us pursue it a little. She did not keep hens merely as a hobby, while being at the same time in a dreamy almost ecstatic state. No, the cackle of those hens makes a harmony. It strikes a right keynote, and false notions have to re-adjust themselves.

Did she have a vegetable patch? Most likely. If she had the ground it would be her housewife's instinct to us it, realising that God intended it to be put to service. This point is no mere trifle; it is dwelt on in scripture. Remember the story of the talent that was hidden in the ground so that it brought forth no increase. God condemned that servant. Could anyone imagine Our Blessed Lady saying

to God at the Judgement; 'Yes I had a strip of ground but really it was not worth the trouble of cultivating it; it was easier to buy the vegetables in the village'?

Consider also that those vegetables were to nourish her son, so that there was a sort of necessity that she should have a part in producing them.

Accordingly to the circumstances Mary would be found doing all the things which the normal woman would do, and interesting herself in a practical way in everyone and everything around her. In this we have come to a sort of central point, of which the chickens and the vegetable garden would only be the signs. She was housewife and mother at Nazareth as a preparation for being mother of the whole world. For it is God's method to use this life in every way as a preparation for the next. If we are to have a special role in the next world, we enter on it here and, so to speak, serve an apprenticeship to it. Mary was the perfect citizen at Nazareth in order that she would be the perfect mother and model in Heaven, loving each of her children individually and being utterly concerned in all their affairs. Note that it is not enough to love people in bulk. It could be no more than a sentimental transaction. The ordinary king and queen are said to love their subjects, but how many of them do they know individually? It is, after all, a vague, unreal form of love which never gets down to the individual person.

### **Taking Trouble is her Trade**

Not of that general, remote type is Our Lady's love for mankind. Being in God, she sees each one separately, distinctly, in minute detail. She knows all about us, almost infinitely more than would the most attentive mother on earth. And she devotes herself to each one as if there were

no other person. Indeed she goes far beyond that. She loves and tends each one of us as if we were her own son, Jesus: which in truth we are through the wonder of the Mystical Body.

Taking trouble with us would be her trade, even what might seem to us as unnecessary trouble. She could not be uninterested in anything, which bore on us. She could not take the easy way out of any situation or leave things in a state of underdevelopment. In Nazareth she would not be indifferent to defects of any kind, and the same would hold good in her wider world of today. Even local disfigurements would hurt her because each one of them stands for human indifference or helplessness. They are there because people are so undeveloped in taste or so apathetic as not to be disturbed by them. Or perhaps the people do see the misery but are not in a position to do anything about it. In either event Mary is troubled. In the first case, because that stagnation of mind most probably denotes a stagnation of soul also. In the second case, it is a minor tragedy that people are helpless to rectify things which are wrong, and that there is no one to come to their rescue.

The spirit of Mary is supposed to be our spirit. We are meant to take after our mother. She rears us spiritually. To the extent that we are wanting in her spirit we fail. In the main the world is failing in that respect. Loving the individual and being interested in him is indeed the very reverse of the modern outlook which is that of seeing people as a crowd and dealing with them in bulk. There is more talk today than in any previous age about fraternity and the serving of men, but it never gets down to the man. Problems are left as mass-problems. They are approached on bloodless lines; and as blood is a necessary

ingredient of life, these problems elude solution. This in turn means that they will come to be regarded as normal or unsolvable, so that even that cold, official treatment will not be given to them. Then they begin to rot and corrupt everything around them.

### **Putting Idealism to Sleep**

The bloodless approach ends up in the handling of people on paper and without personal interest. Pass Acts of Parliament ordering people. Put tariffs on. Subsidise industries. Issue beautiful literature. Prove conclusively that good conduct is a paying proposition; that if all work together harmoniously the world would be a new Garden of Eden; and so forth!

After that elaborate impersonal process has run its course, one is surprised to find that the laws have not been efficacious, nor the tariffs, nor the good advice. In the main people have continued on in their wilful selfish way; the right chords have not been touched in them. The stirrings of idealism have been effectively put to sleep. The difficulties have not eased. The solutions have not been found. The community does no more than survive in convulsions. As a wise man said to me one time; 'The bloodless approach gets only the tenth part out of a man.'

As roughly typical of what is happening in every department of life, may I give the following: Recently I was privileged to talk to a large gathering of Agricultural Instructors, a responsible and expert body. My theme was that they should make full use of their tactical position in the rural community to propagate what we have been calling True Devotion to the Nation, i.e. that patriotism is not merely a war-time virtue, but far more a work of peace; that each individual is responsible for his neighbour; that



he must serve his community with self-sacrifice – and that this is the only realistic way of fulfilling the Christian programme of loving all men.

At once several spoke, saying that they would not have regarded this as coming within their scope and that they had never thought of going beyond the purely technical in their function. But then the few who were legionaries among them intervened and propounded the fullness of our idea. This afforded striking evidence of the necessity of the Legion to a community and to the nation. Is it possible that outside the Legion few possess an understanding of what full duty is or what patriotism means, or on what those things are based?

### **True Devotion to the Nation Necessary**

In my subsequent comments I suggested to them that their method was the bloodless one; that the mercenary motive would not produce important results; and that True Devotion to the Nation, with its combination of the spiritual and mundane, was necessary to them even on the professional plane.

I suggested that the typical contact, which they were having with the agricultural community, would be something like this: 'You must plough deeper and closer furrows. You must use such and such a seed, also a new fertiliser, which are a little dearer but will give better yield. Doing these things you will make more money.'

That line of talk certainly states a fact, but analyse its impact on the ultra-conservative rural mind. He reacts against it instinctively. He does not want to be moved. What was good enough for his father before him is good enough for him. His brain freezes, for it has been reduced to the lowest level of thought, in which uncertain

profit contends against extra work and risks. Possibly it is demonstrated to him that with the expenditure of more money and effort he will do better financially. But how far does that carry one with people whose idea of an advantageous transaction is that of making money without any extra trouble? Moreover, he will quote local examples to prove that the fine new plans can go wrong, but he will not produce what he also knows, namely that human defect had entered into those cases.

From the expressions on the faces of those instructors it was evident that my little word-picture had touched a nerve-centre. Apparently that was their experience in the average contact. They were pushing at a locked door in people's minds; they were not using the key, which would open it. They were speaking the wrong language to persons whose notion of improvement is not that of making more effort but of making less, whose ambition is in fact easy money. From their own angle, those farmers are right. Why should they make slaves of themselves for money alone, and that is more or less what is being put up to them. They are able to live in their own simple way as things are. They are reasonably content. Why should they disturb all this for the sake of problematical gains?

### **A Little from each can Amount to a New Order**

No sufficient motive has been proposed to those men. The motive which would count has not been put into the scale, namely Christian idealism, the welfare of the community, the brightening of things around them, the providing of a future for their own families, the making of the country a little more prosperous, the sending of a current of extra industry moving – all of which, like the Gulf Stream, would carry diversified warmth with it and

help to raise living above the level of mere existing. Even a little contribution from each one could add up to a New Order.

Though I have been talking in terms of one section of the community, I think that my contentions would apply to all sections. We are satisfied with insufficiency. We do not see the imperative need for developing either ourselves or others to the fullness of our capacity. A certain proportion moved by intense worldly ambitions, strive enterprisingly, but the rest, for want of an adequate motive, are content to stagnate. Necessarily the tide of life forces us forward, but we yield to it grudgingly and only partially. Life in general is lived at a fraction of its real possibility.

This would be bad enough if it were a matter of this world only; that is if the end of life terminated all. But unhappily in one sense that is not the case, for the doings of this life carry on into eternity. It is true that we can triumph in failure. The most fruitful life may be a voyage through shallows and misery, but such would only be the case if we are interiorly rising superior to the failure and making spiritual profit out of it. This would not apply to the state of underdevelopment and disheartenment to which I have been pointing. And what else but indifference and sin will rush in to fill a spiritual and idealistic vacuum?

### **A Hurt to the Whole World**

Too often nothing but the minimum is proposed to the people, which means that they are being subjected to that process of mental freezing. Minds cannot possess or project a character, which has not been offered to them. The apparent failure has been a real failure. Human possibilities are not being elicited. Talents are being left

unprofitably in the ground. Genius is going to waste. Heroism is unexploited; idealism is perverted by the atmosphere and frequently turned to wrong causes. And worst of all potential sanctity is left to be overgrown by the weeds and stifled.

It is no case of the span of this life only, but of all eternity. Nor is it a matter of a local loss, but of a hurt to the whole world by depriving the Mystical Body of quality. All those stagnant souls should be at work. Potential in each one is the mission of influencing the world. Gray's 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard' contains many beautiful lines. One verse is appropriate here:

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear.  
Full many of flower is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

It becomes infinitely tragic when that undiscovered gem could be a Francis of Assisi; or when the flower that wastes its sweetness could be a Little Flower. Yet that is what is happening all around us in every department of life. The economic or worldly failures are symptoms of moral defects. The natural waste is being paralleled in the spiritual order. The social misbehaviour is simultaneously taking place in the soul.

One is struck by the suitability of the Legion as a means of bringing this tangle into order and sense. It has the motive power and the manpower. It is not merely a multitude of works, which could mean but little. The Legion is the supernatural principle applied in detail to the persons and problems around us. It is the Catholic doctrine put into action through an excellent system – as



our late bellowed Holy Father said. It is truth combined with charity. And so it should share the Church's attribute of being gold with the strength of steel.

### **Words of Pope John XXIII**

Is it an excess thus to measure the Legion against human disorder? Well, here are other words of Pope John XXIII, spoken on 13 July 1960, to a pilgrimage of French legionaries: 'The Legion of Mary shows forth the true face of the Catholic Church.' Even distantly to approximate a society to the Church is to ennoble that society. Perhaps, too, those august words suggest that the Legion presents the Church with its different features in due proportion; that the Legion acts correctly in basing itself on the doctrines of the Mystical Body and Our Lady's mediation; and that the Legion is a worthy instrument of the Church's action?

Can the face of the Church become obscured? Not to the eye of God, but it can to the eye of man. For instance, if it is not shown at all to those outside. Or if it is only partially shown, as happens when our own people remain ignorant and indifferent so that they are only seeing the Church as through a glass darkly. Or if that face is shown dirty and disfigured by our own poor living.

So out we must go to exhibit the lovely face of true Catholicism to all. We must seek out each individual in the spirit of Christian love. We must try to bring to them their glorious heritage of living in Christ. We must breathe on them the warmth of genuine interest. We must be the channel of Mary's Motherhood. We must nourish them on doctrine, teaching them the full implications of the Mystical Body.

Doing these things, we will enable Our Lord to live in men, to rule them and through them to conquer. But in

spite of all our numbers and organisation, we will succeed in none of our aims unless we have that spirit of Mary in us. And I sum up the spirit of Mary in what I said at the beginning: Though she was intimately united to the Holy Trinity, she kept hens at Nazareth.

## The Jehovah Witnesses

The papers are full of a forthcoming convention of the leaders of the Jehovah Witnesses. It is suggested that 5,000 of the chief figures among them are going to hold a celebration here for a week. If they come among us, it would be very important that the legionaries should in number approach them, not by way of violence or anything of that description, but in an effort to reason and to use the opportunity of presenting to them the doctrines of Catholicism. Experience has shown that, while these people are going around approaching Catholic homes all the time, they know very little about the Church.

The Jehovah Witnesses is one of the most extraordinary religious movements that have yet appeared. The newspapers indicate that it is presenting itself under the title of the International Bible Students' Association. That name is not actually pretence; it is one of the names under which they have advertised themselves. Another name is 'The Watch Tower' and another 'Millennial Dawn'.

## The End of the World

The Witnesses belong to what might be called the unreasoning fringe in religion. Their very existence and the things which they believe show the dire consequences of separating oneself from the Catholic Church. You not only seem to separate yourself from right doctrine but even from common sanity. There are many groups which manifest this tendency, among them the Mormons, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Pentecostals and the Christian Scientists. While all of these differ vastly in what they teach, all have one thing in common: They have no doubt whatever about what God is up to, what the right doctrines are, what is the fate of mankind and so forth. They pontificate on those things with complete assurance and to a degree infinitely beyond what the Pope would venture to say. And after all, the Pope has a right based on scripture and they have not. They specialise in foretelling the coming end of the world. They all agree that it is just ahead; that it is going to assume a most unpleasant form and that your only chance of saving yourself from very grievous consequences is to join them.

Armageddon is a great word among them. Armageddon is supposed to be one of the signs of the approaching end of the world and it means the rushing to arms by the nations. That is one of the favourite themes of that entire unreasoning fringe. They also insist that the very near future is to be a time of pestilences, earthquakes, floods, a rain of fire, in addition to that universal war; and that out of all mankind which is to perish so frightfully in this ordeal, the fringe will survive happily. They and only they will be immune to all the horrors and terrors. Therefore you should join up.



## **False Prophets Arise**

Another characteristic of those fringe groups is that they are not founded by people whom we would be inclined to regard as virtuous. Some of the founders are somewhat in the villainous category.

The Jehovah Witnesses was a split off from the Seventh Day Adventists. Charles Russell, who founded the Jehovah Witnesses, was a haberdasher. He was born in the State of Pennsylvania in the United States in the year 1852. He joined the Adventists and he tells us why he was converted to them at his very first Adventist meeting. He heard them declaring that there was no Hell and that for some reason or another appealed very much to him.

Now the Adventists were in that category which expected the end of the world immediately. At that time when he joined them, they were expecting the Lord to come in 1873. The extraordinary thing about these folk is that it does not matter how many times a false prophecy is made; they merely continue to adhere to their group. Their founder, Malcolm Miller, had already prophesied that the world would end in 1843. It did not, but that made no difference.

Russell did not content himself very long in the Adventists. He did not see why Miller should be any better than he, so he also was stirred to found a religion. He took up the scriptures and proceeded to read them and had no particular trouble in drawing the truth out of them. Everybody else before him apparently had failed but he was perfectly confident in his ability to produce the truth. He went further and set himself up as the complete authority on the scriptures despite the fact that he knew neither Hebrew, Greek nor Latin, which are the original languages of the scriptures.

He declared that the second coming of the Lord and the end of the world would be in 1914. He taught that Christ was a spiritual being, none other than St Michael the Archangel, who was sent on earth to redeem mankind, receiving for that purpose a body from the Virgin Mary. At least that last little item is true. After his Resurrection, Christ returned to Heaven even more spiritualised than he had been before.

To listen to their doctrine is to realise that it consists more in negation, in a list of the things they do not believe in, than in the things they do receive. They are very emphatic about the things they do not believe. They do not believe in the divinity of Christ, in the Eucharist, Hell, Purgatory or the immortal soul. In fact they are against almost everything: Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, the movies, military service, the United Nations, tobacco, higher education, fishing and hunting, Freemasonry, labour unions, Sunday School, voting and the YMCA. This is obviously a pretty wholesale condemnation of everything around. Nevertheless people flocked in numbers to Russell's standard because the end of the world was so near and the consequences of not being on his side when it did happen were pretty awful.

### **Who Then Can Be Saved?**

Now what was going to happen according to this strange creed? The number to be saved in all time will be only 144,000; that is to say only an inconceivably small fraction of those who will have lived on the earth from the beginning to the end. On what is this suggestion based?

There is a reference in Scripture to the 144,000 virgins who are to be saved through martyrdom. This is the figure that he seizes on and that is the number of the saved in

all time. As these are all virgins, the married ones among you had better look out. Most of that number, all except 13,000 (they say), had already been filled up in fact before the Jehovah Witnesses came on the scene at all, so that the number remaining to be filled up from the ranks of the Jehovah Witnesses is only 13,000. Those 144,000 persons will reign spiritually in Heaven. They have apparently in respect of that particular number a conception of Heaven somewhat similar to our own; that is a purely spiritual existence, a living with God. Only 144,000 however can enjoy that happy state. Reading their literature it seems that there is no particular ambition on the part of the Witnesses to be numbered among those happy ones. Their idea of living with God in Heaven is something beyond them and does not figure much in their propaganda.

However the 13,000 vacancies are to be filled from the present and future Witnesses. It is computed that about two million reckon themselves as Witnesses today so that 13,000 is a very small proportion of them. What then happens to the remainder of humanity? First of all let us take the Jehovah Witnesses themselves. They either die before that dreadful day when the world ends or they live through it. This awful rain of destruction upon the earth, with its earthquakes, appalling fires and war and everything else will apparently leave them untouched. They will be as if they had immortality. They will live through it all, but nobody else will. The world then will not perish but will be improved. All the disasters, having done their duty of polishing off the population of the earth, will then subside and a very peaceful sort of world will ensue, in which all those Jehovah Witnesses, who were alive at the time, will live happily on.

## Problems in Paradise

Their conception of the new world is quite childlike. You just go about your ordinary life as you did before but on the level of a social worker's idea of a better world. The real troubles are pushed aside and you have good sanitation, no plagues or big sicknesses or wars. There will be no dangerous animals about; even the obnoxious little ones will be done away with. There will be no excessive heat or cold.

It is surprising however to know that in this future paradise in which you live on forever, you will continue to court, to marry and to have children and apparently to have all the common worries of life. You will have to have a job and you will earn your bread. Will there be discontent? Will there be any naughty people necessitating a police force? They are silent about these things. It sounds pathetic and one is driven to exclaim: 'Who wants to live on forever in such an air-conditioned paradise without hope of anything better ever?'

That is the heaven that the Jehovah Witnesses will enjoy with the exception of the 13,000 who have qualified for the higher spiritual existence. A problem in this new world will be that of over population. The experts who deal in statistics tell us that the population of the world doubles every thirty-seven years and this in spite of all the ailments, wars and earthquakes that continually visit us. Moreover, in that Jehovahland no one will be dying at all. In those circumstances the population will double every year or two. In other words they are going to have a tremendous population in a short time. Where will they find room on the earth after a while? But that question is settled very simply, authoritatively, prophetically and finally for us by the Jehovah Witnesses. At that stage



when living room becomes a difficult problem people will have no more children. It settles itself as easily as that. It is certain that the world is not going to be a brighter place without children.

In addition to those who live through the end of the world, there will be resurrected those Witnesses who had died before that great event happened. They will rise up and they will live this sort of paradise existence that the Jehovah Witnesses paint. There will return to earth the ancient magnificent figures: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, and the others. And also a number of definitely good people who had died before the Jehovah Witnesses came on earth at all.

What is to be the fate of the remainder of humanity, that inconceivable totality of millions who had lived upon the earth and who had died? Answer: they will be annihilated. They will cease to exist at all because there will be no place to put them in. They have not qualified for the new paradise and there is no Hell to send them to.

### **Yea, And More Than a Prophet**

It cannot be said that the founder of the Jehovah Witnesses was an exemplary character. Russell's marriage ended in the divorce court. After the detailed evidence which was given in support of the application of his wife, the judgment of the court declared that no woman could be expected to put up with the treatment which his wife had received from him. He had admitted, to quote his own phrase, that he fluttered around with any woman who attracted him and it is a testimony to the fairness of the sex that many women did attract him in that way. I have already mentioned his plunges into false prophecy. He also sold 'miracle' wheat at a dollar a pound. A dollar

in those days was worth a lot more than a dollar today, so that you could say that he sold the wheat at £1 per pound. He gave a guarantee with it that its yield would be five times that of common wheat and of course his followers wanted to be in on that sort of bargain, so they bought large quantities of the 'miracle' wheat. The attention of the United States Department of Agriculture was attracted to those glowing promises and they wanted to be in on it too, because it would revolutionise agriculture. They bought a quantity of the wheat and sowed it under good conditions and they watched it.

They found that the yield was exactly normal. They prosecuted Russell but he escaped prison by refunding the money in respect of the purchases. He also sold a cancer cure which consisted of a chloride of zinc paste and I do not have to explain that it was not a success. His speciality in quoting the Bible was to put together texts taken from different parts of the Sacred Books. It has been shown that absolutely anything can be proved by having recourse to this process. A little example of this is the following: 'Judas went out and hanged himself. Go thou and do likewise and what thou doest do quickly. This is the great commandment of God.' That is a sample of what different texts put together can work out to.

Russell died in a train in 1916. It is worth noting that the end of the world had not come in his time.

### **The Disciple Is Not Above His Master**

He was succeeded by Judge Rutherford. Rutherford was not really a judge and had no claim to that title. He had served for four days in a substitute capacity, the judge being absent. He was the clerk of the court and they put him on the bench for those four days. That was enough to

qualify him for the title ever afterwards. He disagreed with much that Russell had taught and proceeded to relegate Russell and most of his teachings to oblivion.

Russell had been a great man for democratic government and believed that the Witnesses should be operated on the principle of one man one vote. Rutherford dissented altogether from this and announced that the Lord Jehovah had informed him that he wished to govern the people of God, that is the Witnesses, directly through Rutherford. God would communicate his wishes and his plans to Rutherford who would tell them to the multitude, a very simple operation.

In general he gave the Witnesses a face-lift and introduced a whole variety of new doctrines. He got into trouble over the 1914-1918 war. He denounced it and he opposed military service and he urged the people of the United States to rebel against their government. For this he served nine months in jail.

One of his ideas was that the word 'God' is quite an improper word. He brought out an edition of the Bible which eliminated that word every place it occurred and he substituted the word Jehovah. He assured all and sundry that Jehovah had a violent objection to being called God and that he would take it out on anybody who ventured to style him by that name.

In 1920 he predicted that the patriarchs of the Old Testament would come on earth in 1925 to usher in the end of the world and the beginning of the new era. He proceeded accordingly to buy a mansion for them in California and he planted the entire estate with palms, olives, figs and other vegetation proper to the Holy Land, so that Abraham, Moses and all the others would feel absolutely at home when they arrived. When they did not

turn up Rutherford became more wary about prophecy and contended himself for the future with the celebrated slogan 'Millions now living will never die'. That is a rather safe prophecy if you think it out, because it would take at least a hundred years and a lot of investigation to disprove his statement. It is one of the extraordinary features of that particular creed that such a flagrant example of false prophecy with the fig trees and olive trees and other embellishments did not upset one of his followers. I leave that to you as a rather remarkable fact.

In 1931, deciding that a good thing should not be wasted, he moved into the mansion in California himself and he lived there until he died in 1942. Some of his followers objected to the mansion and to the lavish style of living that he allowed himself there and also to the nature of his language. We are not given details as to the language.

### **A Businessman, A Simple Liver**

Rutherford was succeeded by Nathan Knorr who still heads the Witnesses and will no doubt be one of our visitors soon. He is a businessman, a simple liver. He has revolutionised the Witnesses. The earlier techniques followed under Russell and Rutherford was that the Witness came to your door and when it was opened he put his foot in the door to prevent it being shut. Then he produced a phonograph and played off a little propagandist piece which was recorded on it. Knorr has done away with the phonograph and with the putting of the foot inside the door. He aims at creating a sort of professional corps which would receive rational argument. But how one could argue rationally about those things I have specified, it is difficult to see. He has suppressed most of Russell's and Rutherford's writings



because they so contradict the generality of the present day teaching of the Witnesses.

The literature issued by the Witnesses is in stupefying quantity, but it bears the name of no author. The reason for this is that Jehovah is supposed to be the author. In other words, you get something written there in one of their publications and that is Jehovah himself telling you the good news.

Less definite prophecies are still indulged in today. Often on their lips are the words: 'The world may come to an end before the clock strikes next.' As well as the time worn one that millions now living will never die.

They have made their own translation of the Bible in which the word God does not appear. This version has been declared by scholars to be beneath contempt. They do not use it in their door-to-door work because it would alienate people. It is utterly amateurish and exists for no other purpose than to bolster up for themselves their own theories.

### **Reason for Phenomenal Growth**

The astounding fact remains that despite their incredible tales, their false prophecies and their doubtful originators, they represent the fastest growing religion on earth. Their publications achieve figures that are colossal by any standards. Five million books issue from their printing presses in different editions annually. Each member of the Jehovah Witnesses is taught to regard himself as a fully ordained priest, bound to spend all his spare time in propaganda. They must take no part in state or local affairs, nor must they vote. The number of what they call 'Publishers,' that is of fully active members who go around publishing the good news, is about one million.

Every fortnight, four million copies of their magazine, *Watchtower* issues in 61 different languages.

The great hate of the movement is for Catholicism though it has given up its earlier practice of picketing the Catholic churches. It makes least progress in places where the proportion of Catholics is high, and that would be a very good reason for their dislike of Catholicism.

In the United States they say that if a knock comes on your door it is either a Fuller Brush salesman or a Jehovah Witness. At this stage a cry of anguish is squeezed out of us: Why do we not show this kind of zeal?

The Witnesses' programme is in tune with this age of ever recurring crises. The atom bomb must have helped them greatly because even the wisest among us do not know what is going to happen. The mention of World War, of the hydrogen bomb and so forth causes the simple to listen to this talk about Armageddon and the painful end of the world. It has been said that no other sect has so completely caught the imagination of the unimaginative. Fantastic propositions and rulings issue from their headquarters and are received as absolute Gospel. The movement progresses rapidly, not because it is irrational but, and this is the tremendous thought, because it is apostolic; because every member goes out and tries to interest people. If such is their success, what could we not do if every Catholic was prepared to be as active as those poor benighted souls.

### **Their Only Chance**

It is our apostolic duty to get in touch with them, to argue with them about some of the absurdities of their creed and to tell them the doctrines of Catholicism. Here are a few things that should be remembered. Every one of

the Catholic doctrines which you know so well and by which you live is there in the scriptures as plain as the proverbial pikestaff. Propose that to them. They will retort on you that you are taking the wrong meanings from the scriptures and they will speak as if we know nothing about the Bible. An effective argument in this situation is the following: All their publications are copyright. They are tremendous on that side of the law. Therefore when they speak to you about scripture, your retort should be: 'That book is ours. You have no right whatever to it. If the copyright laws had been vested permanently in the Catholic Church, we would be in a position to prosecute you for producing an edition of that book.' That is a simple argument which would appeal to them because they understand what copyright means.

Our contact with their weird sect should have one good consequence for us, namely, to cause us to reflect and to ask ourselves if we should not be doing more than we are for our own exquisite faith. Here are these deluded people who set out to convert the world and are prepared to suffer all sorts of hardships, even prison, in the doing, and we, the countless millions of Catholics who possess and really in hearts value the Faith are content to take things very calmly. Many among us are not prepared to lift one finger in active service of the Church, conforming to a minimum below which one cannot go. It is sad.

Let the spectacle of these people be a stimulant to us. Let their coming among us cause us to sorrow for them and to go out and talk lovingly to them and to try to make some impression on them. It is probable that many of them will never again have the chance of having the Catholic faith explained to them.

## The Head and the Body Depend on Each Other

The Lay Apostolate is your theme. No more important subject could be treated at the present time. I feel deeply honoured by being asked to play a part in the Jubilee Congress of the Christus Rex Society which has so enterprisingly applied itself to the problems of priests.

We stand at a period which is undoubtedly a crossroads of history. An era is passing away. We confront a new one in regard to which we can make guesses but no more than that. It is a future which is going to be dominated by Asia and Africa. Since about AD 300 our western world has been animated more or less by Christian ideas. These have largely leaked out into the total circulation, so that today all men are living out of inspiration derived from the sweet Lord Jesus even though they do not realise the fact.

But as to that future: There is so little room for the exercise of optimism that one is thrown back entirely on faith and it is in terms of the latter that I approach my subject. The political menace is such as to make all those



old bitter enemies, the European nations, think of coming together again in an up-to-date version of the Roman Empire. The materialistic menace is so rampant that it may be said to have poked at least an icy finger into every man's heart. It has of late produced such monstrosities as the Bishop Robinson and 'God is Dead' movements.

Dogmatic religion has come to the stage of having retired inside the frontiers of the Catholic Church and these frontiers have been steadily contracting. Catholicism has been a diminishing percentage of the world population. It is now 17 per cent. If the graph which has prevailed continues, we will have fallen to 5 per cent at the end of this century – a span so short that the life of Our Lord on earth would cover it. In that case we would not have the right to call ourselves the Catholic Church, which means universal. So for mere survival there has to be a renewal.

Desperate people clutch even at straws and there is the temptation to repose our hopes on the council – not that the council left to itself solves the future. It only delivers a programme. It is only in the measure that it throws the Church into battle array that it means anything; and that is the purpose of the council.

Examine its legislation. Every item, even those which do not look like it, is directed towards the marshalling of the laity. For the higher orders in the Church only exist for the sake of the body of which they form part. Contrariwise, we must beware of regarding the Lay Apostolate as something separate from the Priestly Apostolate as if the two were distinct things. They can be, but this would be equivalent to the organising of an army as two separate bodies, officers and rank and file, each waging its own independent warfare. Such an army, if it did fight at all, would end in a collapse. And so that

army must be one. Officers and ranks must only denote a difference of function, each existing to help the other in their common purpose. Identically the same must apply to priest and laity in the spiritual warfare. All I say is based on that idea, so that for the purposes of my paper the terms 'priestly' and 'lay' are almost interchangeable.

Merely as a practical matter - that is in relation to the task of approaching directly and affecting three thousand millions of people - the notion of the priest working on his own is fantastic. But there is a far more peremptory idea to be taken account of.

The Pauline analogy of the human body necessarily falls short of the unity, diversity and interdependence of the Church. Still as an image it is the best available and it is supremely helpful. I touch on that note of interdependence. If the natural body only functions in part, it will be at the price of partial, or perhaps total, failure. The same role applies to the Mystical Body in a superior degree. The role of the priest is analogous to that of the human head and thus to the Mystical Head. He is so to speak Christ on the spot. He has headship functions which it is not necessary to draw out into detail. But he exists for the body, not for himself alone. Many priests interest themselves little in the apostolate of the body. It has even been formally taught that provided the priest works hard on his own or for his own sanctification alone, he does all that is required of him. No, in failing to give apostleship to the body, the priest would be establishing it in a state of underdevelopment, of half-living according to Pius XI. This insufficiency would frustrate the Church's mission.

That would be bad enough but there is more. Apply again the analogy of the human body, as we are supposed to do. That half-living, or half-dead body, then fails in its

function of supplying life to the head. It communicates its own condition to the head. As an inevitable consequence, the head will be reduced to the spiritual indigence of the body. I stop at this but emphasise the vital importance of the theory.

The council tells us for the first time that the apostolate is a necessary part of the life of the lay person. It is a corollary and a novel idea that the lay apostolate should be equally necessary to the life of the priest. You are a Priests' Society. This aspect is primary for you.

There are further and limitless perspectives. A partial functioning of the Mystical Body will not cope with the problems of the New Age; will not present the true face of Christianity, will not even regard the converting of the world as practicable. It will get no further than documentation, empty calls to arms and futile formulae of co-existence.

I venture to propound some principles relative to those headship functions:

You must gather around you a group of lay people in apostleship.

You must seek to impart to them everything that you have yourself (including your priesthood by inspiring vocations in them or in their families). You must pass out to them as much of your apostolic mission as is compatible with the lay state. If you impart to them less than you can, you fail as the mystical head. And this brings us back to the remorseless cycle that as you fail to give, so you fail to receive.

Your more intimate connection with the general body of the laity will be through that apostolic group. This is by reason of a principle to which I would give the name of Spirited Nucleus. More simply Our Lord called it the leaven.



Pius X once ranked this as the most important element in the health of a community, over and above vocations, Catholic schools, Catholic press, building churches. We are tempted to regard this as exaggeration. But let us reason it out. If you have not got those Spirited Nuclei in your places, the people will be left at the mercy of other spirited nuclei representative of evil movements. These will inevitably triumph. As a consequence there would soon enough be none to fill the churches and schools, to read the Catholic papers and to supply vocations. The Spirited Nucleus is your buffer against attack; your bridge against isolation; your interpreting medium; your Archimedean lever in your individual powerlessness.

The Mystical Body must not only function as a whole; it must be absolutely orthodox. Here I refer particularly to the doctrine of the Blessed Virgin which seems the one most controverted in certain quarters. These in their ardour for reunion with those outside the Church diminish her role and in process do not hesitate to challenge the magisterium. The consequences of that policy, where they have become visible, are intimidating. They are actual fallings away from common doctrine, from practice, from faith. The Blessed Virgin is the neck or the heart of the Mystical Body.

The council teaches that her place in apostleship is primal; an extension of her motherhood of the actual body of Jesus. Therefore those who essay apostleship must do it in her company. This applies to the priest. He is the closest to her function in grace. The priest as the Mystical Head has no effective communication with the body except through her. Furthermore, in the measure that he is in understanding of the union with her, does his contact with the body become closer and more influential.



The Decree on Ecumenism and on the Church in the Modern World invites us to enter into grips with all the religious and secular problems of the world. Association with all groups is to be sought. Catholics must lend their aim to them in every form. This summons is addressed to the laity and to the clergy, not to the latter alone. It creates an extraordinary and delicate position. For the fact has to be faced up to that the ordinary body of the laity are not up to that standard. To be witnesses of the Word to all classes of men, to be safe in the midst of all problems and to seek to turn all those contacts into openings to convert – is beyond the capacity of the casual Catholic. He will only end by attuning himself to those circumstances and in the end perishing in them. If a compass needle is not magnetised, it alters its bearing with every movement of its container. A casual Catholic is an unmagnetised needle. He has never been initiated into his apostolic function. This must be done. He must be given effective direction and inspiration. This will only proceed through adequate organisation.

Granted the right type of organisation, those decrees open up to the priest a fascinating field, more ingenious and absorbing than chess, as exciting as warfare. What more celestial occupation than to imitate the Lord by gathering around one an apostolic band to plan and to penetrate into all those unpromising milieu for the ultimate purpose of Catholicising them.

Here let me urge that the foundation idea must be the wish to convert. If that be absent, absent also would be the element of grace with the result that the work will be of little avail to those whom we approach, and will be of danger to ourselves. Anything without motive power will be taken hold of by the current, including an inert

faith. A modern menace is that of a mere humanism of humanitarianism, which seems to be on the uptake. It is being purveyed as a sort of gospel.

*Prima facie*, this suggestion of universal conversion is chimerical. Many view it so and their practical interpretation of those decrees, and also of the Decree on the Church in the Mission-field, is that they only have in mind the exerting of an 'influence'. But if the ordinary Catholics are thrown into those most difficult religious, intellectual and economic spheres on a basis of no more than mere co-existence, they will be lost. For their immediate suitability to those conditions is exactly that of the man on the street to a battlefield. As he stands he is actually useless. Then can nothing be done? Do those decrees represent no more than window dressing? Oh no. They restate the global commandment of Our Lord: Go off and get in touch with every man on earth and tell him about me. And those who believe, you are to baptise in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, as one would expect in regard to a divine injunction, the proposition is a practical one if approached on proper lines. And those lines I now proceed to discuss.

Any old way will not serve. The formidable degree of failure which attended the drive of Pius XI towards Catholic Action illustrates this. It is to be noted that whole hierarchies threw their weight in behind that drive, including the supplying of good direction and equipment. One would imagine that in such circumstances the Holy Spirit would *ex officio* enter in. But apparently he will not, if certain ingredients are missing.

It may be said: You speak of the uselessness of the untrained man in war. Does this not apply fully to the spiritual warfare? Are not careful training and formation

essential? As a reply to this would land us into quite a discussion, I must short-circuit it by a little credo of my own: We must not interpret formation as a classroom system or as some form of intellectualism. For that would turn apostleship into a reserve of the elect. Nor should we presume that a brimming piety automatically overflows on to others in the shape of apostleship. It was such misunderstandings as these which led to the failure of so much of Catholic Action despite all the devotion lavished on it. More ingredients go towards the making up of apostolic material than the speaking of words. So many indeed that the advance writing down of an apostolic prescription is impossible. It has to be compiled from analysing something which has succeeded, much after the way in which penicillin was devised. I refrain from specifying all the ingredients which I would regard as necessary, lest it be supposed that I was using this august occasion to promote a certain brand of apostolic merchandise. But the fact remains that success has been won, and with average human material, and on a world wide scale, and which shows itself capable of being indefinitely increased.

Apostleship must be wedded to doctrine so closely that the latter forms its roots. In Christ and subject to his own union with his mother, we carry on his apostolate. This must be the immediate motive, constantly renewed by appropriate prayer and thought. If it is not a spiritualised apostolate that we carry on, it will not achieve a spiritual conquest.

Witnessing to Christ must mean vastly more than 'giving good example' – which lay people used to be assured was the only apostolate they had to fulfil. This idea that if we conduct ourselves reasonably well, onlookers will be



induced to think, 'I must join that person's religion,' would be pathetic if it were not so disastrous. It provides the perfect justification for doing what nature bids us to do, which boils down to nothing. Thereby is the Church laid waste.

Above all, we are not to make that costly modern mistake of equating apostleship and knowledge. The two are not the same thing. And they may even be independent of each other. It is possible to have a great zeal for souls and at the same time a real reluctance to get into direct touch with them. This can easily happen in the case of a writer or a professor. It could come from shyness or a fear of the unknown. It is just as likely that apostleship will become learned as it goes along as that learning will become apostolic. I cite the case of two of my friends, who were quite uneducated, as representative of an immense class who have not education but possess extraordinary capacity to get in touch with people and win them over. This is not sufficiently appreciated. On one occasion I gave a talk on one of those men whom I have just specified. After it a priest and three laymen who were working with him, came up and attacked me for striking a wrong note in apostleship. But they do not realise that book learning as a basis for apostleship condemns us to an army of officers without soldiers, a select body which will never get beyond the stage of skirmishing.

Of course we must strike to improve our material. Any worthwhile system will work constantly towards that end. But our standards must be proportioned to our aim of reaching every soul. They must not be such as to keep people out, or to drive them out. Dependence on the well versed person as the typical apostle means that the whole world of souls cannot be approached as commanded by



Our Lord. Indeed such a comprehensive campaign is only theoretically possible if the entire nominal Catholic population of the world is mobilised to a conversion programme. The population of the world is three thousand million, and of the Catholic Church five hundred million, that is one in six. It is even straining a point to suggest that one apostle could convert five persons. But all things are possible to God!

The objection will come: But 90 per cent of the Catholic flock is non-practising and yet you are counting them as apostles! Yes, that is true. Is it to be acquiesced in that they should remain in their state of degradation? They should be what they are supposed to be as Christians; that is practising and apostolic. Note that in the 1930s the Philippines were non-practising. Now they are in the main practising. There are 6,000 branches of the Legion there and they have adopted the slogan: 'Asia for Christ though the Philippines'. Brazil, about 20 years ago a certain mark for Communism, is now fighting back. It has 5,000 praesidia which grow rapidly. Likewise in many other lost lands! With the right machinery it is easily possible to turn the non-practising and non-Catholic into apostolic material.

Having discussed the question of learning and non-learning, I now go on to say that neither will accomplish anything, nor even attempt apostleship, without the pressure of organisation. The council legislation, while insisting that every Catholic must be apostolic in some form, suggests that this will only be realised through organisation.

The organising of seminarians into the apostolate has been spearheaded by the Legion. The results are excellent. Why not the nuns as well? The Assistant Mother General

of one foreign order came to Dublin, donned civvies, and worked with the legionaires for several weeks at every class of work including the street work. Here we see significant approaches to the welding of the entire Church into an apostolic machine. I repeat: the Mystical Body must work as a whole.

We have been speaking of approach to all men for the purpose of conversion and of a taking in hand of all the problems of mankind. For this is what is envisaged in the full range of the council's decrees. In order to show that the council's blueprint is not a mere airy fairy business, it is necessary to present examples which would indicate that such total conquest is possible. This I now do. If it be thought that I have not covered enough ground, I could extend it. In talking to a large gathering of bishops in Rome, I did extend it greatly.

In North-West Scotland over two years, nine priests and 88 lay folk went to every home and explained Catholic doctrine. Prophecy had been unanimous that such an approach would be resisted by violence. One bishop had refused permission for his territory on the grounds that he did not wish to add a lot of Irish names to the martyrology. The enterprise was a unique success. Practically everyone was willing to listen and many seemed to have been waiting for the Catholic message. In particular it had been alleged that the approach of the priests would stir up mania. After some disconcerted moments they were well received.

In Copenhagen 12 lay people devoted two weeks to speaking to persons on the streets who did not appear to be in a hurry. Their apostolate was from 12 a.m. to 10 p.m. with intervals for meals. The result: 1,200 really interested contacts, with about 150 promising to initiate

the Catholic Enquiry Centre correspondence. Note that it is always contended that the Scandinavians have no faith, are cold and are specially unapproachable on the subject of religion.

A young Irish girl living in Sweden declares it to be wide open for Catholicism. This is based on her own considerable experience. Every day she has made a point of speaking to 10 different persons on the subject of Catholicism. So far she has encountered one real rebuff only.

An area of tolerated prostitution and general horror, in existence for about 120 years, was closed down in two years by a straightforward religious campaign. Practically all the misdemeanants were absorbed in a lasting conversion. In another locality at about the same time the conversion at a stroke of 23 street girls, living in one house, was effected. Only one of these cases appeared subsequently to have a less happy issue.

The Mercier Society anticipated the Dialogue by 27 years. It was free from leaning backward, from compromise or co-existence. During its career of three years it brought in several conversions and more have come in since.

There has been a mass-resistance to the Communist persecution in China, entailing death, or the equivalent to death, to a vast number.

There has been success in mobilising the primitive peoples to apostleship. The Decree on the Church in the Mission-field insists that this be done, but it was already in operation since 1931.

Some 3,000 Mohammedans in the Congo have been converted. In other places, many similar conversions have occurred, although religion is supposed to be impermeable.

One girl in one visit to Russia put 600 persons the question: 'What do you think of God?' She records that she did not receive one hostile answer; that she was dealing with people perplexed by the problems created by atheism and who would be anxious to be able – as they said – to believe in God; that it would give meaning to life!

Over four or five years the parish of Tuosist, 22 miles long, in Co. Kerry, on the brink of extinction being without marriages or births or industry, was given heart and put into vigorous life by the application of the principles known as True Devotion to the Nation.

Is the organising required for this mobilisation difficult, special, needing expertness and involved training? Not unless we want to make it difficult, as so many do want. The process is quite natural if we will only view it supernaturally. Jesus Christ gathered around himself about 120 persons and committed them to an apostolic course without so far as can be discerned, any elaborate formation. He gave them an ideal, a mission and a command. His Spirit entered into them and a fissuring process ensued to which ultimately we owe our own faith.

That initial grouping for apostleship under the auspices of Our Lord himself was not intended to be unique. The fissuring proves that. It was meant to be a pattern for the behaviour of every one of his future priests, the local Christs. If they do not fit themselves to that pattern, then they do not accommodate themselves to Christ, no matter how energetic their manoeuvres may be.

But when they do gather around them the people of God and say to them: 'Behold our hands full of the treasures of redemption, help us to scatter them abroad' – then Jesus is no less among them than of old. But he is present on



the old conditions, that is by the intermediary, and not without it, of his Mother Mary, Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix and Mediatrix. The ancient wonder reproduces itself and the days of unlimited conquest come again. It seems to me to be as simple as that.

## Modernising the Legion

A lot of people have got it into their heads that the Legion of Mary must be updated, as they put it. So let me say something about the modernisation of the Legion. Numbers are found expounding that theory. But that is not quite the same thing, we have found, as saying that they are interested in the Legion. Because from an examination of their suggestions I have to declare my conviction that the vast majority of them do not proceed from what could be called a first class interest in the Legion. Some of them are disgraceful, anarchical.

When suggestions for reform are made, it is imperative to look back to the early ideas of the Legion and to see how new ones fit in. So, I return to the first meeting. Viewed from now, it forms an interesting inspection. There was a sureness of touch and a confidence as to the future. Those people were planning for distant days. As one example: It was not at the moment possible to take in men and that for a very practical reason. We were meeting in Vincent de Paul premises by the kindness of that society. If we proceeded to take men into the new society, it would

have been a definite act of rivalry, unthinkable in the circumstances. But men were included in that gaze into the future and it was insisted at that first meeting that the Legion was equally for men and for women.

In the second place, the remarkable feature stands out that there was no temporising spirit in that group of doers and planners.

That in itself is amazing to think over, for surely if they were anxious to gain numbers, as they were, they will tone down what they demand to what they are likely to get? No, they were concerned only with that they themselves were willing to give. Others who would enter would have to conform to that.

At this point let us suppose the *modern* attitude to what was proposed at that first meeting. There would be protest: 'You are asking for too much! The Rosary is unthinkable. No active society uses it at meetings! It would take precious time from the consideration of the work! Besides a weekly meeting and a weekly work are just too much! Thereby you condemn yourself to a select and small membership. Furthermore, this extravagant notion of the Blessed Virgin upon which you are founding your work will debar you from numbers and most probably from Ecclesiastical approval!'

And there would seem to be sense in such objections. The circumstances of that time must not be judged from the standpoint of the present when the Legion system is so accepted.

The facts were then as follows: Apostleship was regarded as a counsel of perfection; it is only now that the council insists that it is a *Christian obligation*. At that time there were only about 50 ladies in Dublin who were carrying on apostolic action in the ranks of the Ladies' Association of

Charity. It was universally held that apostleship did not appeal to the fair sex. Furthermore, the True Devotion of St Louis Marie de Montfort was practically unknown. Unquestionably people would not be prepared to accept it as a standard.

If that original scheme, inspired by the True Devotion, had been issued in the form of a prospectus it would have met with a storm of disagreement.

So it would then have been reasonable to object to those requirements as excessive. Yet there was not a word of protest from the band. And the same attitude characterised what followed – the growing of the Legion. For it did grow, contrary to those gloomy forecasts that we have been imaging. Far from doubting as to the accuracy of its course, the Legion grew more confident as it went along. It had not been thinking too big after all, for it saw numbers coming in. Its horizons expanded; it began to use its slogans, now so familiar to you; to talk audaciously of going to every man, a programme which would entail a simply colossal membership. So the parallel slogan was produced at an early date when Monsignor Deery declared that the potential membership of the Legion was equal to the Catholic population. A very daring idea at the time! Even now many outside the Legion would still regard that as empty dreaming. But it is a dream which is in process of coming true.

Now just a word of comment on that extensive proposition. How can we hope to get all Catholics into membership considering that only about ten per cent of the world's Catholic population is practising? But they *should* be practising, and they *should* be apostolic and we *must make* them so. At this our friend, the practical man, protests indignantly: 'Come down to earth. Have



commonsense.' But strange to say, the idea is practical. For example, in the 1930s the Philippines were non-practising. Now there are 6,000 praesidia there with more than 75,000 active members. Brazil and other imperilled countries are staging the same happy anomaly. So after all those fantastic legionary ideas seem to have something in them. The Legion is able to transform non-practising and non-Catholics into active members.

Moreover, in the earliest documentary presentation of itself, the Legion insisted on quality as the key to eventual numerical strength, just as it likewise insisted that its alleged extravagant devotion to Mary was only a norm, below which one should not and indeed could not, safely descent. The council promulgation on Mary would appear to constitute support for this point of view.

Likewise the Legion was so convinced that there was not too much prayer in its system that it soon added the auxiliary degree and then the praetorians and adjutorians, anticipating the council's legislation on the Liturgy.

I have mentioned certain additions to the Legion system. This brings up the question as to whether the Legion is receptive of proposals for improvement. Empathically it is. The Legion eagerly welcomes proper suggestions and considers them most anxiously, for in each one may lie something helpful and perhaps the germ of a great new work. From its beginning the Legion was not only growing in numbers, but was also fertile in ideas. It has been unceasingly prolific of new works. This process is a continuing one. Let us hope it will always characterise the Legion.

I give you just a few names to show you the importance of that aspect: The adjutorians, the Patricians, the Peregrinatio Pro Christo, the Viatores and True Devotion

to the Nation. Actually the Legion is like an ever budding tree, producing all the time, without – as far as can be seen – any final borders in that respect.

But that incredible fruitfulness proceeds from its scheme and depends upon it. So be careful about the *essence* of the Legion. Especially let us be solicitous about Our Blessed Lady who might be described as the *quintessence* of the Legion. 'Quintessence' is a chemist's term for the essence of the essence.

So I go back to her. That first group was clear in its mind about her. It saw her as de Montfort did, and it has seen her that way ever since. It is intriguing that the Legion should start immediately after what I might call a 'Patrician discussion' on the subject of the True Devotion, as if the minds of the future members had to be fully acclimatised to Mary before they were fit for membership; before they could *become* the Legion of Mary. Any suggestion that its Marian scheme should be toned down would have seemed preposterous to those early legionaries and their successors.

Indeed the idea would be the opposite. Having glimpsed her glory and tasted the fruits of her leadership, they wanted more not less. In actual fact no suggestion to minimise Mary was ever made in the Legion until quite recently and then as part of the turbulence which we have been considering. Perhaps it is a consequence of, or a penalty for, that incorrect trend that quite a rash of other reforming propositions has broken out. These touch everything in the Legion and they contradict the whole course of legionary tradition. They all involve diminutions. They are proposed in the alleged interest of making the Legion more acceptable to those outside, and therefore increasing its membership and also of making the Legion easier on its existing members.

There is an element of stupefying contradiction about this phenomenon of unsettlement at a time when all the original ideas of the Legion have been so completely justified, not merely by successful practice but by the council legislation. It has been proved that strength of membership could be built on those principles; that the simplest people could understand them; that Mary is no barrier but the necessary mother and that a degree of conquest unprecedented and un contemplated could be achieved.

Can we assign a cause for this unexpected and inconsistent germination of theories which are so opposed to the current of legionary life? Probably it was linked with the council itself and the preparation for it. We see that there has been a disturbance of minds in the Church and that a lot of festering thought has suddenly burst forth. While making all allowances for the desirability of enterprising thinking, I think it will have to be agreed that many persons have gone too far. Everything in the Church has been attacked and in a definitely nasty way. The Eucharist and Our Lady have been the chief subjects of this perversion, but the papacy has followed close behind. One is distressingly reminded of the tone which characterised the instigators of the Protestant Reformation. Some have even feared that we were facing a second such manifestation; that many were making ready to leave the Church. From that consummation we seem, thanks to the inspired action of the present tenant of the papacy, to have been saved. But the price of retaining in the Church elements that are somewhat out of sympathy will be that we will suffer torment from them. This forms a dolorous consideration for the after council time.



Now we in the Legion have to see that the Legion is not destroyed and that it is not too much tormented. A part of that process of safeguarding lies in keeping before us our beginnings, tradition and principles. A phrase from the Council Decree on Adaptation and Renewal of the Religious Life is particularly applicable to this position. I quote it for you: 'It redounds to the good of the Church that institutes have their own particular characteristics and work. Therefore let their founders' spirit and special aims be kept before them and their sound traditions be faithfully held in honour.' Among these founders whose mentality is to be so carefully preserved I specify – as a remote one – St Louis Marie de Montfort. For secondary reasons, persons commonly put his treatise on the True Devotion away from them. I mean that they are not attracted by the Consecration or Slavery which he proposes and so they think they have nothing to learn from him or his book. That is an error which is costly to them. Thereby they miss the treasure which the book offers. Here is what Cardinal Tedeschini says on the subject: 'He has given us a Mariology such as no one before him has conceived. So deeply has he explored the roots of Marian devotion, so widely has he extended its horizons and he has become without question the announcer of all the modern manifestations on Mary – from Lourdes to Fatima, from the Definition of the Immaculate Conception to the Legion of Mary.' On the foundation of that Mariology of his, he has built his special devotion, but the two things, foundation and building are different. It is legitimate to refuse the special devotion, but it is disastrous to reject along with it his splendid Mariology.

The adhering to our traditional guiding lines has already brought us far, and a greater career and adventure is



opened up to us as a result of the council. I would say that the Legion is one of the big thoughts which the council fathers carried home with them to their territories. In part this is due to the endorsement given by the legislation to the Legion type of organisation; in part because the Legion seems to stand out as the obvious instrument for implementing all that council legislation, which insists so imperatively on the need for the co-operation of the People of God.

I have given you a sort of snapshot of that earlier idealism of the Legion. We must steer our future course according to it. In the recent edition of the handbook, which contains new items of a proper updating character, you will find some quotations from the council legislation. These will show you how up-to-date the Legion has been. For instance, the first attempt at a Constitution of the Church sets forth a description of Our Lady's providential role which sounds like a paraphrase of the handbook's depicting of that same thing. Much the same would apply to the other legionary features. Take any of them, then consult the legislation and you will find that it is there endorsed in some form or another. The council seems to confirm the Legion and its up-to-datedness. An analysis of the various decrees does not reveal anything which would seem to call for a readjustment of the Legion system. So it looks a little as if what is being demanded is not for improvement but for change's sake. Bear this in mind when you hear those confident utterances about revising and modernising. Those who talk in this vein may be only reformers in the improper sense of that word. If so, it is essential that they seek their ideals outside the Legion, where they will be unfettered.

## True Devotion to the Nation

This should be an auspicious occasion. We have returned to our birthplace, Myra House, this time as owners. Moreover, it is in happy circumstances that is for the holding of this Pentecostal Conference, out of which in the past has flowed important developments for the Legion. May we hope that this one is destined to be as fruitful. It is not so easy to value the conference at this moment. There were many things which should not have been brought up at all – defects of praesidia and the like which are matters for the Curia or a Congress, whereas we should have been treading higher paths. The best way to improve a mediocre praesidium is to inspire. It springs from a sense of the greatness of one's mission. A restricted outlook can stifle inspiration. Thus our apostolate must be seen in its full dimension and this we would believe entails the programme known as True Devotion to the Nation.

If I had doubts as to the success of this conference, they would be dispelled when I cast my mind back over

the preceding events of the kind. In 1958 the first TDN Conference took place. There was quite revulsion of feeling at it. Many were distressed, angry: they felt that a menace was being directed at the life of their beloved society; that time honoured ideas were being hurled overboard and that an unjustifiable revolution was being launched in the Legion. Numbers of you here were present on that occasion. To some extent those fears were allayed before the end of that conference. They persisted in certain quarters. But where today has there been a trace of such dissent?

Where life is expanding and seeking outlets, one must expect such situations. New ideas insert themselves and develop, causing anxiety. Then they slip simply into their place and it is seen that they have filled an unperceived gap. Definitely there is in the Legion a principle of orderly growth, of design not our making, which is both touching and strengthening because it suggests the care of a maternal power.

### **First Baby Cry**

The Legion came into existence in the upper room at the end of this hall. It is the original statue which stands before you. The first baby cry was a declaration of its dependence on Our Blessed Mother. From that moment its attitude towards her was distinctive and in a fashion pierced the future. In June 1921 Pope Benedict XV had granted the Feast and Office of Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Graces. It is remarkable that a few months later the infant Legion was building itself on that doctrine and with reasonable understanding of it. It was a true case of the duck entering into water and finding itself in its element. The word 'Mediatrix' was not used at that first meeting, nor until sometime later when the legionaries learned of that papal

grant. But from the first moment they had the inner essence of it. They understood it in the perfect way of being able to put it into practice. Out of that knowledge of her emerged the Legion scheme. The doctrine of the Mystical Body was only properly grasped as the result of trying to understand her. Then with the doctrine of the Mystical Body came all its light on the nature of the Church, the true basis of the apostolate, the function of the sacramental system and prayer. All of these ingredients go to make up what we call the life of the Legion. Mary our mother still maintains that legionary fabric and it will strengthen or weaken according to the Legion's appreciation of her. The Legion always realised that she was no mere devotion in the Church, but a necessary part of Christianity itself, conjoined to Our Lord and made by him a condition of the imparting of his grace. The *De Ecclesia* decree, which is the first effort on the part of the Church to draw up a Constitution for itself, affords an astounding endorsement of that Legion attitude in all its aspects.

Let me mention one or two of its more striking details. One is that Mary must be taught to the world; that Catholics must understand her essential maternal role. Having grasped it themselves, they must pass it on to those outside the Church for these are likewise her children; her separated but dearly beloved children to whom she is truly a mother. That is an idea which we have always been proposing. It derives from Leo XIII but has been imagined to be a Legion idea. Now it is promulgated by the Church as part of Catholic doctrine.

### Queen of Apostles

Another of those supposedly Legion ideas now endorsed is that Mary is Queen of Apostles in the sense that the



apostolate depends on her, so that her co-operation in all work for souls, including those outside the Church, must be sought. Success depends on that co-operation which she will give if she is asked.

As she has that special part in Christianity, so she is the key to our problem of today: True Devotion to the Nation. In the mystical Nazareth it is still a question of Mary tending her Son. She is not interested alone in feeding him and unfolding his mind. She is solicitous about every aspect of his life; his physical welfare, his comfort, his recreation, all things which would surround him and affect his life. She sees him in all men. She looks on his life as a whole. It would be intolerable for her if he should be afflicted in any department. It is certain that she would wish to remedy anything which was wrong. And this is the basis of True Devotion to the Nation.

Of course first things rank first. The essence of everything is the spiritual, the divine things. But the body is inextricably entwined with the soul and the material things with the spiritual; each affects the other. It is not properly possible for us to concern ourselves only with the soul of a person. Love does not think along such lines of restriction. You love the whole person and you long to serve him in every way. It would constitute a peculiar position to talk religion to a person and to be indifferent to his misery. A natural mother would not act in that way towards her child and neither would Mary towards her mystical child. We are supposed to be the agents of Mary, tending her child, united to her action. We must be as Our Lady to the community.

But I insist there is no abandonment of our traditional scheme. There is no dropping of our spiritual programme, but only an intensification of it. We have not relaxed our

rule against the giving of material relief. In fact we have become progressively strengthened in regard to it. We believe it to be our bulwark against the mere humanism which has absorbed so much of the Catholic apostolate. Too much of the alleged apostolate of today is but a cult of the material even though a spiritual gloss be imparted to it. With sufficient agencies devoted to the giving of material relief, it is vital that the Legion should remain constant to its aim of seeking first the kingdom of God. TDN is an effort to do this and then to reach out to the 'other things'. This order of values is essential. The spiritual must be the motive. The prevailing tendency is to rule out that motive and to commit the people's lives to secular and technical handling. This is not even a distant relation to Christianity and we must energetically try to impart true balance.

But 'material relief' is to be correctly interpreted. It does not include that rendering of services to the individual and the community which constitute TDN. While our great preoccupation is the spiritual, it must not be viewed too narrowly, for that spiritual concerns all life. All life springs from it and ministers to it. If we are to distinguish between what is primary and secondary, it should not result in the neglecting of either. If we are dealing with the secondary aspects stressed in True Devotion to the Nation, it must not be to the detriment of the primary one. We must not for a moment lose sight of the soul. It is to the soul that we are really addressing ourselves through the means which we use, each of which should be viewed as a lever to uplift faith, to promote moral good.

### **Mary's Outlook Must Be Ours**

Mary's own outlook must be ours. Whether she was attending to Jesus himself or to the more remote operations

of running her home, she always had the interests of the Holy Trinity in clear focus. So in any situation where we are in doubt, think of her, how she would act and she will give us true direction. The legionary must see Jesus in his neighbour, who is all mankind and then must serve him in every way, using each way to lead people on to proper levels of religion. Too much of common Catholicism is a veneer. I do not say that it is insincere but it does not go deep enough to influence the ordinary life.

Included in that process of Christianising must be the making of one's place more happy, more prosperous, more beautiful, more enlightened; the creating of employment and the stopping of emigration.

One of the special means of aiding in that process would be the fostering of honest dealing in every shape. So dislocating is the defect in this department that I have wondered if a 10 per cent improvement in common honesty would not bridge the gap which separates the impoverishment of the world from a modest comfort.

If this is fulfilment of duty to the Church and to one's neighbour, it is likewise patriotism. This word opens up before us unknown, uncharted territory, for what is true patriotism? There is no model of it in the world. The nearest is the brand of self-sacrifice and devotion which develops during a war. But this is motivated by hate more than by love and appropriately it is directed towards destroying. So it is imperative that a correct model be somewhere provided.

This is doubly necessary having regard to the way in which the modern state tends to widen its functions. Animated usually with the best intentions, it seeks to manipulate people's minds. It moves more and more towards thinking for each one, arranging his life in detail.



By a creeping process it is appropriating to itself rights which Christianity has always regarded as belonging to the individual.

### **A Modern Menace**

This could work out to be a pure tyranny. The modern idea attributes to the 'state' quasi-omnipotence. Governments honestly imagine that they have an unlimited power over the citizens. This could prove intolerable even if operated on lines of true democracy. But often enough it's a case of the dictatorship of a few persons.

This has all the colour of the menace described in that novel *1984*, where Big Brother looks into every room through a television apparatus and supervises everything for the 24 hours of the day. It is towards something like that dismal position that the state idea is steadily slipping. More and more is being taken into its scope. Possibly this may result in providing for every material need. But analysed, such an improvement looks dangerously like a comfortable slavery. And inevitably that evolution will clash with the Catholic Church, which ultimately has to insist on certain rights for the individual, believing that God has given those rights. 'From the useful institution which it was, the national state has become the threat to civilisation that it now undoubtedly is.' These words are not mine but Arnold J. Toynbee's.

That tendency towards taking over by the state is largely due to the passivity of the citizens. Having been taught no sense of responsibility in respect of the defects around them, they do nothing towards remedying them. So it is inevitable that the state is forced to intervene in regard to the greater evils. Then the intervention and the inertia are both progressive. The citizen fades away into a cipher



put into a computer which will decide what is to be done with him.

If the people had shown a proper sense of responsibility, much of this would have been avoided and healthy communities would be the result. Most of the graver problems are due to maladjustment of some kind and would yield to principles of self-help and Christian behaviour. So there is no need for the individual to forfeit his rights to the state in order to be able to live.

But this is a truth which must be practically demonstrated. This is of such importance that God will help if we but play our part. The lack of a model in this particular case results disastrously in the absence of any idea as to what patriotism is. In the case of say flying, the correct theory was present long before the practical model was attained. People understood what flying meant. They knew its laws and indeed everything about it. The one thing missing was an engine which could lift more than its own weight. The moment the internal combustion engine was discovered, the problem of flight was solved; all the laws and principles were ready. The usual procedure is that the idea precedes the working model and eventually the model emerges. But it is different in that case of patriotism where there has been neither the proper idea nor the working model.

### **What is Patriotism?**

Then what is patriotism? What is its basis, its motives, its scope? This degree of uncertainty declares it to be an unknown quantity. It will be understood either as:

That wartime formula; or as

A sentimental conception without rational

roots. As such it will be seen as a mere rivalry and rejected by sensible men;  
 Or as a device for exploiting people. Dr Sam Johnson defined patriotism as the last refuge of a scoundrel.

Therein lies the extreme importance of True Devotion to the Nation. It is the practical working model which teaches us the correct theory of Christian patriotism and shows how it is to be applied. If it can be made to prevail, it would usher in a revolution infinitely greater than that produced by the discovery of the steam engine or electricity or atomic science, because it is in the superior moral order. One helping circumstance is that everybody is at least in a hazy searching for such a thing; nobody is satisfied with those common conceptions of nationhood.

For all its defects, Ireland is in this matter the best off by reason of its having faith. If we could ameliorate our position in a worthy and striking way, we would secure imitation from the world which seems to be wheezing to death in terrible convulsions. We would qualify as that nation visualised in the handbook, which solved its problems and as a matter of automatic consequence attracts the other nations to learn from it. Moreover and more important it would afford convincing evidence as to the power of Christianity so much derided today as an obsolete superstition.

There is a further reason why the Legion must enter on this new territory of TDN. Big changes are about to accomplish themselves in the apostolate. Certain aspects of it have been seen to be based excessively on the economic and material. Many of them repudiate any programme of converting. If in certain places the Legion

is taken up instead of those other apostolates, it will be required to undertake works which they had specialised in. Through TDN the Legion is enabled to attend to them inside its own framework of motives and method.

There is another reason why we must work TDN vigorously. Perhaps it is due to the Legion's vivid projection of the apostolic idea that there is a surge of new societies and humanitarian projects around us. Most of them have no religious note in them. Add on new efforts by Communism and Protestantism. So that if we do not go at once into that field we may find it largely taken over by those agencies. This would be serious as presenting that position deplored in the handbook where we had been anticipated and out-soldiered. Also it would mean that certain works are being left at the mercy of purely human motives. How far will these bring us?

### **Ireland – The Taking-Off Ground**

But a paramount reason lies in the necessity of the country which is the taking-off ground for this project – Ireland. Let us be frank about it: There is nothing in the country which could be described as a national idealism. There is a poor realisation of duty or service of the community. It would be a great mistake to think that our problems are mainly economic. Actually there is much money flowing, hundreds of millions of borrowed money among it. It is difficult to get labour. There is much drinking and misconduct. There is insufficient public spirit. There is a determined and partly unnecessary emigration. There are jobs available but the people are determined to go. Patriotism should be showing itself in some sort of dutifulness towards one's country, at the very least in a willingness to stay in it. But that is not in evidence. Some

aspects resemble anarchy. Definitely there is at work a malady which, if it is not cured, will kill us spiritually and probably nationally.

A group of us have just come back from a short trip which involved the staying in a different place every night. I would not say that it evidenced a consoling religious position. In two of the places eleven people were at Holy Communion in the morning of which we were seven. In another at Sunday's Mass the priest appealed that everyone should go at least monthly to Holy Communion and he pleaded that people be not ashamed of being seen going to the altar rails! This in the era of daily Communion!

That rural inadequacy compares badly with the adjutorian degree which the Legion is proposing to the general body of the people, namely daily Mass, Holy Communion, all the Legion prayers and the saying of an Office. With backing, that programme could be made to sweep Ireland.

In those localities one felt that the life of religion had reached an irreducible minimum and that it is not presenting the true face of Christianity. If there are any idealistic impulses stirring in those communities, they are not derived from religion. Nor are those places capable of withstanding a moral or religious attack. Yet they are leisured, nothing stirring in the early part of the day and thus affording scope for the adjutorians, the Patricians etc. The Patricians is a positive necessity; it is an efficient way of teaching the adults their religion. Need I add that there are no praesidia in those places?

All that sounds bad. But we are far from being the only victims of a misunderstood civilisation. All the other countries are suffering similarly, or far worse. In a recent issue the London *Times* published a survey of conditions



on the English countryside. It shows a like unsavoury stagnation, but deprived of the religious note which at least we have. Beer, weekly Bingo and a discontent with one's surroundings: These constitute a fine formula for the warping of human material.

A better order does not spring up of itself. There must be some force to animate it. But not all such forces are good. For instance, a Communist cell would be an energising influence. It would be a bad one, but it would certainly set things moving in various ways. It would start every sort of hare-brained schemes: plans for reform, schemes of taking over the property of the 'rich', promises to give something to everybody. And somewhere in the picture would be the weaning of people from that enemy of progress, religion!

### **The Formula – A Well-Worked Praesidium**

That stirring, that animating must be done. But it must be approached on correct lines; that is for Christian ends and out of Christian motives. My formula for that animating principle would not exactly constitute a 64 dollar question because you all know the answer. It is a well-worked praesidium. I do not suggest that the Legion is the only animating principle. But it is the only large-scale, recognised one which carries the religious motive to its full logical conclusion. It does not base its apostolate on a vague appeal to Christian humanitarianism which could mean absolutely nothing. Even unbelievers constantly have that word 'Christian' on their lips. The Legion proposes as motive power the doctrine of the Mystical Body in all its detail, including of course Our Lady. This doctrine obliges us to think in terms of every person in each place and of all aspects of life there; cultural, economic, recreational and of development in every sense.

Commonly the absence of unemployment is regarded as denoting prosperity, so that the people do not bestir themselves towards development. That apparent prosperity is fictitious because those places are providing for their children by the simple method of emigrating them. The resulting position is the opposite to true prosperity. For a community, like a family, should normally provide for its children. This can only be done by a continuous development of industry in all its forms.

All this must not amount to selfish localism. It must be expansive. People solving their problems in a small country place, must at the same time be thinking of the whole country. More than that, there should be a holy internationalism. Here I point to the movements which the Legion has produced. They emerged in a particular place, but a pendant or essential thought was: How are we going to apply this to the whole world? Just now you are witnessing this legionary instinct at work in the *Peregrinatio Pro Christo* and the *Viatores Christi*. To the extent that we progress with True Devotion to the Nation it will similarly be utilised for the benefit of the world.

Is it necessary to point out that this sort of thing, done all over a country, builds up into Christian patriotism? Necessarily that Christian love must concentrate initially on the people one meets, but it must ambition to help all men. If patriotism is basically religion, then the Legion is the best organisation to implement it because it unites the two ideas.

There is also a primary psychological consideration to be reckoned with. Man is not meant to be alone. In the individual resides an extraordinary quality of helplessness. It must be supplemented if he is to be made effective even in the mildest degree. This defectiveness is at its greatest in

the moral order. But the gaining of a helper makes all the difference. A few working together stimulate each other on to courage and conquest. As a special exemplification of this I again give the case of Communism. A handful of them can take possession of and control a nation. They accomplish this by binding themselves together in a tight, single-minded unity, and then by striking at any unity outside themselves. Thereby they throw the population into individual isolation and consequent helplessness. The mechanism for this is universal spying and fear. No one has any real communication with others and therefore cannot lean on them; is afraid even to express his thoughts to another.

That effected, the highly organised few can do what they like. It is because they correctly recognise in the Legion a counter principle that Communism fears the Legion. The Legion works for religion instead of against it, for unity instead of division; exhibits the martyr spirit instead of weakly yielding. True the Legion cannot avail of the Communist mechanism of secrecy, spying and fear, but love and grace will outweigh those things. If a sufficient number be induced to assert themselves, it becomes impossible to suppress a whole people like a flock of sheep.

In what way is the foregoing applicable to a Christian community? Suppose a Communist cell to be operating there. It would not have the power to force its will by direct action. In these circumstances it would not sail under its true colours. It would work with supreme effectiveness by creating a wrong atmosphere, one of cynicism, of quiet pressure; jeering at any sort of idealism, at patriotism as a narrow, outmoded sentiment; at religion as a superstition which has been disproved by science; and



so forth. Religion can be put completely on the defensive in places like those previously pointed to, where there is no praesidium, no Patricians and where the people are ashamed to be seen going to Holy Communion! Surely there is some malign activity there! I do not say that Communism is at the bottom of all those rotten attitudes. There are other agencies.

It is a matter of life and death that we organise on proper lines. The praesidium is perfect for that. It brings together persons on a basis which more or less excludes really unworthy elements, that is, it summons them to prayer and disagreeable tasks. Then it educates them in the full Christian philosophy, doctrinal and practical. Soon they understand each other and this is the beginning of action. They realise too that their ideas are held by many in the community. In this feeling of unity lies strength. If that praesidium works faithfully according to its principles, it can accomplish good. Better still it can enable good to overpower evil.

Definitely there is some moral force in the Legion which makes it effective in dealing with the cynical, materialistic and falsely intellectual brigades. It commands a hearing for its views and it expounds its spirituality and idealism without timidity or human respect. We do not find the legionaries ashamed to be seen going to Holy Communion! But I repeat that without the praesidium those same compelling and essential ideas would be submerged by all that cynicism, mockery and materialism which exercise a withering effect on the mediocre Catholic. It goes without saying, however, that the praesidium must be given its chance by leadership and encouragement.

I think that the place without some form of organisation equivalent to the Legion is in peril. For there is no doubt



that the materialistic and evil aspects are gaining ground. If the Legion were to be eliminated at a stroke, I believe that the effect on Ireland would be like the breaking of the dykes which protect low-lying land; that is the oncome of a deluge. In the second place, I contend that the proper working of the Legion would cause good to prevail and would lead on to a Christian order.

Such are the principles of TDN, and there in the praesidium is the machinery to put them into operation. I contend that they must work, because they are based on grace and the love of God. Those simple strivings will be effective where statecraft and governmental power are helpless.

### **Success of an Experiment**

As a crowning evidence of what can be accomplished by the balanced scheme of TDN, I give a case in Ireland where the circumstances of an entire district, 22 miles long, were so uniformly deplorable that it would seem reasonable to call it hopeless. Since the last century it had lost nine tenths of its population and the flow of emigration persisted. No marriage in the preceding five years, and only two children born. With an ageing population, extinction seemed to be certain. Every feature of failure was present; self-help absent; sports non-existent; schools under closing order. Disheartenment was so widespread that it had become the very atmosphere, paralysing energy and good intention.

The Parish Priest declared that it would require a miracle to revive the place, but he added: 'I believe in miracles.' Building on his faith, TDN was set to work in conditions which represented a supreme test for it.

What happened in the next five years forms an epic of all round restoration. I do not term it miraculous

because I would think that, though startling, it is really in the common order, only waiting to be evoked by proper procedure. It is not the will of God that communities be extinguished or languish in misery. A modern sufficiency is available to all who reach out properly for it: neither too much nor too little as the Liturgy petitions. God has pity on the multitude and wants to save it. But human co-operation must enter in: such is his law and he insists on it.

When that self-help animated by faith offers itself, it can effect marvels of restoration. This process need not be a slow one; it can be rapid and such was the case in that territory. In five years a new spirit had declared itself. The place had put itself on the tourist map. Early vegetables were being profitably grown. A knitting industry had been launched. Every aspect of its defect had shown striking amelioration. The revival has taken in all sections of life, the spiritual, the economic, marriages and culture. There is no doubt that it will remain so and do better still, provided of course that the same positive thinking is maintained.

It is probable that this animation (not necessarily of the same kind nor in the same degree) could be accomplished everywhere by the same methods. Obviously too it can be put in motion in every place simultaneously. Then is there not the presumption that any country could be rendered economically sound and otherwise reasonably healthy in a comparatively few years. And it would be a case of true health, because the spiritual and moral considerations would be prominent.

When it comes to choice of schemes, I am not sure but that for us the heart of the matter lies in tourism. Some of you have taken a different view and reckoned that it lies in

the land, in the exploitation of the bounty of nature. So I say that we must not depreciate the one for the other, nor omit the one for the sake of the other. Obviously we must think in terms of everything which affords a possibility; there is no necessary antagonism between the different expedients. Tourism can reach its greatest heights where the land is unsuited to agriculture. As well it asserts itself comprehensively, germinating other industries.

It should be our desire not only to help our own country economically but also to show it forth in an advantageous light. The doing of this latter work must comprise everything from cleanliness to making the most of the scenery and also exhibiting the customs, history and religion. On the economic plane tourism has a particular value for Ireland. Many countries have to import the food which they supply to the tourist. For Ireland it would mean the saving of the costly exportation of its produce, some of it at a loss.

But note: accommodation is the first requirement, scenery taking second place. Therefore the effort should be made to induce householders to cater for a visitor or two. In Scotland this is much developed. One is struck by the prevalence of the sign 'bed and breakfast'. It is essential that the accommodation reach certain qualifying levels. Another aspect is that if people can be induced to take in visitors, it makes them improve their own homes and raise their standards. Moreover, they should be encouraged to do what they never do at present; that is tell the visitors about Catholicism. This the visitors are anxious to hear as lending 'character' to their holiday, but it is denied to them out of a mistaken delicacy, a reluctance to interfere with their beliefs. That could be a costly error from the Catholic point of view. For the amount of appreciation

foreign visitors show when trouble has been taken to explain such things to them is often quite touching. It embellishes their holiday. They go away and talk about how much they have learned. It would be much as if we were visiting India and somebody took the trouble to bring us around the Buddhist temples and explained them to us. But there would be this difference between the two transactions, that God may seize upon the contact at home as a means of bringing Catholicism to the visitor.

I have finished. A gigantic task confronts us far exceeding the greatest human effort and only realisable if the Holy Spirit is with us. But let us only set ourselves to it. The Legion has already been used as the channel of great graces. Perhaps this will be another one because of its very necessity, because it seems to represent a logical outcome of the doctrine of the Mystical Body.

### **Citizens of Nazareth**

Now I give you a paragraph in the new printing of the handbook which deals with this question of True Devotion to the Nation: 'The Legion has a compelling motive for the service of the community. It is that Jesus and Mary were citizens of Nazareth. They loved that town and their country with a religious devotion, for to the Jews faith and fatherland were so divinely intertwined as to be but one. Jesus and Mary lived the common life of their locality with perfection. Every person and thing there was an object of deepest interest to them. It would be impossible to conceive them as indifferent or neglectful in any respect. Today the world is their country and each place is their Nazareth. In a baptised community they are bound more intensely to the people than they were to their own blood kindred. But their love has now to



issue through the Mystical Body. If their members exert themselves in this spirit to serve the place in which they live, Jesus and Mary will move through that place shedding their beneficial influences not only on souls but on the surroundings. There will be material betterment, problems will shrink; nor is true betterment to be gained from any other source. It is this spiritualised service of the community which the Legion has been propounding under the title True Devotion to the Nation.'

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.

