

ADM1451

A RELIGION,—
WITH A MINUS SIGN

An Open Letter to
Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

BY
REVEREND JOSEPH P. CONROY, S. J.



LOYOLA UNIVERSITY PRESS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
1918

Imprimi potest

A. J. BURROWES, S. J.

Praep. Prov.

Nihil obstat

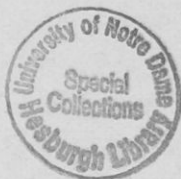
JOHN B. FURAY, S. J.

Censor Deputatus

Imprimatur

✠ GEORGE WILLIAM MUNDELEIN

Archbishop of Chicago



An Open Letter to Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

Dear Sir:—Through the courtesy of your firm, I have before me the booklet reprinted from your article in the Saturday Evening Post of recent date. The pains you are taking to present your views to the clergy of the country make me feel that you will welcome a discussion of those views by any one who has given them thoughtful consideration.

Relying upon this certainty, I beg to present to you some brief comments upon your article, following its trend of thought as I proceed. I shall offer a view of your argument throughout from the standpoint of a Catholic.

Rev. Joseph P. Conroy, S. J.

A RELIGION,—
WITH A MINUS SIGN

Not many weeks or months had elapsed after the enemies of Christ had determined upon His destruction before there was presented to the vision of the world a picture so horrible it hardly seemed that it could be true.

It appeared that hell had broken loose and that a multitude of evil spirits had become incarnate in human form. Christ was hanging upon the cross, all torn and bloody and crowned with thorns amid the jeers of a people cruel beyond belief.

In the face of this awful picture his disciples heard it said on every hand, "Christianity has failed. He saved others. Himself He cannot save!"

The world went on for one hundred, two hundred, three hundred years, and then—after burrowing in the catacombs all that time, apparently annihilated and hopelessly degraded and oppressed, another picture comes before our eyes. In it we see millions of men and women rising as though from the dust, exemplifying in their daily lives characteristics and qualities which command the admiration of the world.

Such is the lesson of history. The Church of Christ had seemed to fail. In reality it had sent its roots ineradicably deep into the hearts of men. The rock upon which Christ had built His Church was still there!

These opening sentences, you will perceive, parallel your own, and from the same premises draw a conclusion exactly the opposite of yours—a conclusion, too, which the facts of history prove to be correct.

It seems to me that you should at once have sensed the initial fallacy underlying your entire thesis that

“the Church has failed.” You argue that “hell had broken loose, millions of evil spirits had become incarnate”; that “atrocities and acts of cruelty beyond belief” are committed. Therefore, you conclude, the Church has failed. But these very things happened to Christ himself and for three hundred years after to His Church, and nevertheless we know from history that the Church did not fail, but arose from the trial stronger than ever.

As a matter of fact, war proves nothing against the Church; nor “evil spirits,” nor “atrocities,” nor “cruelties beyond belief,” any more than they proved anything against Christ himself. These are commonplaces in the history of the Church and she will reckon with them as long as man has free will in this world.

A wicked son may disgrace an upright father, but cannot dispossess him of his virtue. A good government may have evil doers among its citizens, but that does not convict it of unworthiness. Evil spirits broke out among the angels, but it proved nothing against God. The problem of evil is as old as Adam and Eve. Christ recognized it always. He looked down upon evil from His cross and you surely do not blame Him for the evil He saw around Him. Neither can you accuse the Church of failure if evils are around her.

Had Christ caused the evil in the souls around Him, He could be accused of failure. In like manner, had you shown, as you have not shown, that the Church, in principle or in practice, had been false to her trust, that she had connived at evil, or tolerated it, that she had not denounced it and fought against it, then you had advanced your thesis toward a proof. But it is plainly bad logic to assert, as you do, that

a terrible war exists and that therefore the Catholic Church has failed.

I consider, then, your fundamental proposition as entirely unproven. Beyond this point you have no logical right to take a single step. However, evidently fancying yourself secure, you set to work to erect your new "Religion of the Inarticulate" over what you blandly assume are the ruins of the old Church. Let us follow your further process.

After brushing the old Church aside in a paragraph, you become immediately possessed with the spirit of optimism. You discover wonderful virtues practiced steadily by these warring peoples through the four years of the war. We quote:

Rockefeller—First of all is a spirit of self-sacrifice and unselfishness. . . . We see charity exhibited, brotherly love, as it has never been manifested before. . . . And we see beautiful and countless examples of humility.

Comment—Where did all this unselfishness, this charity, this humility, come from? The Church was dead. You proved that by the fact that a terrible war was on us. And right in the midst of the war you discover all of a sudden this tremendous output of virtue. Where did this virtue come from? From the war? Then the war isn't a terrible thing at all. If it gives rise to such glorious virtues, we ought to have war all the time.

If you have studied the history of mankind you will know that virtues are not planted like potatoes. It is impossible that such difficult virtues as you mention should be developed in whole peoples in the short space of four years. These virtues, in fact, appeared in them in the very first days of the war. Did they spring up over night?

Has it never occurred to you that these virtues

which you see practiced so perfectly, spontaneously and "cheerfully," are merely the visible result of the long and solid Church training these peoples have had? Just as an individual shows his latent powers in a crisis, so does a nation. But the power must be there beforehand. Why, then, did you not argue that these countless examples of virtue rising so suddenly before your astonished vision were simply the steady outpouring of the treasure long laid away in their souls through the ministrations of their Church? That is the logical, the human conclusion, but you seem to have missed it.

Rockefeller—Who will forget the story of the titled Belgian women . . . or of the son of the nobleman bivouacing with the son of the peasant, and each finding that under the coat of the other beats an honest and manly heart? We ask, "Of what church are they?"

Comment—If you ask the "titled Belgian women" they will tell you they are of the Catholic Church. It is an even bet that the others are Catholics also.

Rockefeller—But the very thought gives them pause, for they regard the Church as the abode of the "Better-than-thous."

Comment—How do you know they do? Are you so ungallant as to assert, without proof, that titled Belgian women accuse the millions of their country people of Pharisaism? And is it your experience that "honest and manly hearts" easily attribute hypocrisy to their fellow men? In the Catholic Church, no man or woman, priest or layman, dares to take any such attitude of personal superiority toward their fellow man. Catholics are in the Church to be saved, and no one who is a pleader for salvation presumes to any such snobbery. The "humility" which you so much

admire is taught as the basic virtue of the Catholic life.

Rockefeller—An organization in which men and women are gathered together who profess one thing and from which they go forth to practice another.

Comment—Is not this a most reckless and un-Christian charge to make against hundreds of millions of souls who are trying their best to follow Christ? And without a semblance of proof to back it? Are you not here practicing the “Better-than-thou” religion yourself?

Catholics are taught, and trained, never to “go forth” from their Church in practical life, not even by the smallest thought. And if they unfortunately do so, they return with sorrow to confess it and to promise that they will not do so again. The Catholic confessional is the answer to your assertion. If such an assertion is a sample of the “brotherly love” of the new Religion of the Inarticulate, don’t you think it had better remain inarticulate—and invisible?

Rockefeller—The church is, from their viewpoint, an institution which has little sympathy with them or understanding of their problems. It does not speak their language.

Comment—That explains, perhaps, why the Catholic soldiers in our army and our navy are calling insistently for Catholic chaplains and more chaplains. It explains why Catholic priests are answering the call all over the world and flocking to the trenches by the hundreds and thousands. “Lack of sympathy” is what has started Catholic hospitals, orphan asylums, relief associations, homes for the poor, the deaf and dumb in every part of the earth; has sent missionaries to the savages, the lepers, the heathens for the past nineteen hundred years!

“Little understanding of their problems” is what

has opened Catholic schools for the young everywhere and kept them open in the face of appalling difficulties. The sick and the dying call for the priest because he doesn't understand their need; the troubled hearts bring their burden of sorrow to him in the confessional because he "does not speak their language."

Does it not strike you as strange that a Church of so "little understanding of and sympathy with human problems" has maintained herself as a compact social organization through all these centuries? The Church of the poor, without army or navy or political representation or money or any kind of physical force to propel her or sustain her? Whence the vitality that has preserved her from disintegration? And does this vitality not suggest to you that a mighty spiritual force abides in her and is being put forth constantly by her, in spite of every obstacle? Is it not the reason that the Church is resting on, is identified with, Christ in the souls of her children and that she is still as close to them as He? The thinking mind must come to this conclusion.

Rockefeller—Broadly speaking, this great host did not come forth from the church, although directly or indirectly all have been more or less influenced by it.

Comment—So, despite the complete failure which you insinuate above, the Church has been able to influence, "more or less," all this "great host" who "did not come forth from her." Well, if she can so influence even those who are not her own children, *a fortiori* she must be able to influence powerfully those who are within her fold. Then why not gather that great host of outsiders into the Church so that she may have her full and legitimate influence over them?

Rockefeller—Will these people find in the Church

as it exists today the leadership they need? Regretfully we answer, "No."

Comment—Why not? If the Church, as you admit, has influenced them while outside her, why can she not be a leader for them when they are inside?

At this point you begin to diagram your new Religion of the Inarticulate. (By the way, is "inarticulate" synonymous with "disjointed"?) You wish "leaders chosen from among the laity" and doubtless you will be one of them yourself. Shall those leaders be self-appointed or shall they be elected? In either case one scents grave difficulties. But to proceed. Having decreed the Church out of existence, you begin to build up a church of your own. Unlike most beginners, you find a great deal of ready material to assimilate offhand.

Rockefeller—This unorganized spiritual force which is silently dominating millions of lives. . . .

Comment—For a dead Church she seems to have left quite a legacy in the shape of "spiritual force" in those "millions of lives that had been more or less influenced by her." Though you do not respect her, she has been very good to you.

Rockefeller—Let us picture for a moment what this reborn church would be.

Comment—Not entirely reborn, do you think? Because it would have as initial capital those "millions of lives" with their "spiritual force" left by the "Church that failed."

Rockefeller—It would be called the Church of the Living God.

Comment—The words have in them the orotund of the oratorical, but the idea is as old as St. Peter, at least. The Catholic Church has been such a church all the time.

Rockefeller—The Church must have a new birth and be reorganized.

Comment—You say the Church has died! What of Christ's promise: "Upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"? According to you, the power of hell has prevailed.

Rockefeller—The Church may have failed, but Christianity has not failed. Never in the history of the world was Christianity a more vital force than it is today.

Comment—Why, let me ask, do these men see Christ so quickly in their trouble? Why are they turning to Christ in such large numbers and so readily? Is it not because the idea of Christ has been kept near to them, has not been allowed to die out of their lives? And what has kept Him near them so vividly if not the Church?

Rockefeller—Let us picture for a moment, what this reborn church would be. *Its terms of admission would be love for God, as He is revealed in Christ and His living spirit, and the vital translation of this love into a Christian life.*

Comment—You italicize this paragraph as though it were (a) new and (b) important.

It is not new. It is as old as the words of Christ: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart. . . . And thy neighbor as thyself."

As to its importance, that depends upon the interpretation you choose to put upon it. You evolve your religion out of it in a series of assertions that have no authoritative force outside your own "ipse dixit." By what authority do you propose these statements? Where is your commission for this new work? And why should any one take the mere word of an in-

dividual that this is the new religion we are all supposed to be looking for? If Christ's Church died, how are we to believe that Mr. Rockefeller's is alive?" Even if you say that Christ has inspired you to this and if we take your word for that, how can we trust Him, since He has failed in His first attempt?

But let us look at the new religion as it grows under your prestidigitating hand, your picturing imagination.

Rockefeller—Its atmosphere would be one of warmth, freedom and joy.

Comment—"Warm atmosphere" the first thing! Boys, in their downright directness, commonly say, "Hot air!"

Rockefeller—A religion of warmth, freedom and joy.

Comment—A sort of continuous hallelujah chorus. "Warmth, freedom, joy"—what is the meaning of such vague, rhapsodic words? Warmth of what? Freedom from what? Joy at what? The sons of Belial promise us the very same. But you are calling for a Christ-like life. Was Christ's life one of warmth, freedom and joy? Born in a cold stable, living as a poor laborer, a fugitive, a calumniated man, a prisoner without a friend, and dying nailed to a cross—is this warmth, freedom, joy?

What about Christ's words to His followers to take up the cross and follow him under penalty of not entering the kingdom of heaven? Or His, "Amen I say to you, you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice"? Or, "The Son of Man hath not whereon to lay His head"?

Not much warmth, freedom and joy about those words!

Rockefeller—It would pronounce ordinance, ritual, creed, all non-essential.

Comment—If creed is not essential to religion, why do you enunciate one? Your formula is nothing else. A creed is a belief formulated into words. Your italicized formula calls for “love of God.” Hence belief in God. Your formula says, also, that God was revealed in Christ. Therefore, whether you really believe that Christ was God or not, you at least want us to believe that God spoke through Him. And finally, your formula asserts a belief in the necessity of “a vital translation” of the love of God into a “Christ-like life.”

This implies a whole host of beliefs. It makes a long creed out of your formula. For example, if we wish to lead a Christ-like-life, we must know how Christ lived. Where do you find out how Christ lived? You must point to the Bible. Then you must believe in the Bible. Where did you get the Bible? From the Catholic Church. Therefore you must believe in the Catholic Church. Or, if you say you do not believe in the Catholic Church, if you say she is a false Church, then you must hesitate about accepting the Bible. Because she wrote it and had it in her keeping all the time. If she is false, she may have tampered, and very likely did tamper, with that Bible. And so you are not certain whether you have the real life of Christ or not. If you are not sure that you have the real life of Christ to offer for a model, you have lost all certain base for your formula and you cannot go an inch ahead with your new religion.

You first throw out creed as a necessity for religion, and the very next thing you do is to construct a complicated creed of your own. And you have to go to the Catholic Church to get it!

Rockefeller—Ordinance, creed, ritual, all are non-essential.

Comment—You say that your new religion is to be an “organization.” Now I ask you to name any possible organization of human beings in which “ordinance, ritual, creed” are not absolutely required.

Ordinance is another word for rule; ritual is etiquette; creed is belief. You could not successfully conduct a peanut stand without these three. Without rules of sale and purchase you would go bankrupt in a month; without manners you would soon be located in the hospital; without belief in your peanuts, namely, that they were real peanuts and worth the selling, you would reveal yourself mentally deficient in starting the business at all.

How would your own business organization go without ordinance, ritual or creed? Suppose your office boy were to bring a football into your private office and begin to drop-kick it through the furniture. You would protest and emphasize the rules, the ordinances of the house. But little Willie Wildfire is a shrewd boy. He has read the “boss’s” booklet on the Christian Church, and he speaks as follows: “Fade away, sire. I just read your book about the ‘Church of the Living God,’ a great big proposition, to have millions of men in it. You are getting it up and you say in your book that one of the things it mustn’t have is rules. Say, if there aren’t any rules in that big affair, you can’t want any rules in this little thing you call your business.” The answer is, of course, that Willie loses his job. But is that a logical answer?

Or suppose one of your office force should fail in due courtesy toward a client or a customer, would you not rigidly enforce the etiquette of business and read him a lesson out of your business ritual?

Or if a member of your firm refused to believe in your business, its stability, its honesty, its future,

would you not eliminate him as a hindrance to its progress, telling him that he must hold your business creed or retire?

Yet you desire to launch a complicated organization like a world religion, with a membership of hundreds of millions, minus ordinance, minus ritual, minus creed.

Religion, in the very etymology of the word, means a binding together. Where is the possible binding together in your concept of religion? Surely you have named your religion well—the Religion of the Inarticulate, the Dislocated!

Rockefeller—A life, not a creed, would be its test.

Comment—Your church, then, is to apply a test to its members. You say here, definitely, that the test is not to be a creed. Then why did you establish a creed for your own church? It was the very first move you made. Go back to your italicized passage: “*Its terms of admission would be (a) love for God, (b) as He is revealed in Christ and His living spirit, and (c) the vital translation of this love into a Christian life.*”

There is your creed. And you won't let a man put a foot into your church until he subscribes to it. You define for him the “terms of admission.” He must believe in those terms and accept them. Yet in the next breath you assert that creed is *not* to be the test for prospective members of your church.

Rockefeller—Its object would be to promote applied religion, not theoretical religion.

Comment—If you are pretending to talk with any accuracy here you must be aware of the meaning of the words you are using. You must know that theory means the principles underlying a body of concrete facts. “Theoretical religion,” therefore, as compared

with “applied religion,” means the *principles* of religion underlying that same religion in practice.

Now every school boy knows that you cannot practice religion, or music, or mechanics or anything else and ignore the principles underlying it. Yet you advertise as the slogan of your New Religion: “Go ahead and practice religion and never mind its principles.” And this from a man who is promoting a new organization and who has just announced its principles in italics! From a man too, who writes and distributes broadcast a booklet telling all about the “theory” of his new religion!

And his theory is that “We won’t have any theory!”

Somebody is trying to eat his cake and have it.

Rockefeller—This would involve its sympathetic interest . . . in social and moral problems, those of industry and business, the civil and educational problems.

Comment—A problem is something that requires solution. Did you ever know of any problem in any field of life or thought that was solved without recurring to principles? The very word, *problem*, implies that a principle is necessary for its solution. And you said just now that your religion is not to be one based on principles. You propose to tackle all kinds of world-wide problems and neglect their underlying principles. By its very nature your religion is incapable of solving any problem. You have cut the ground from beneath your own feet.

Thus far in your new career as the founder of a religion you have, verbally, done away with creed, made rule and religious etiquette merely an optional affair, and finally you oust principle. This is a pretty good record in just eleven little pages of a brochure. A good deal of tearing down in this new building

process. And it would not be so bad if you would only cast away the wreckage. But you keep coming out when you think no one is looking and sneaking it back to use in erecting your own "original" plant.

Rockefeller—It would encourage Christian living seven days a week, fifty-two weeks in the year. . . .

Comment—Why start a new religion for that? The Catholic Church has been doing that work for nineteen hundred years. We just told you not to be pilfering other people's building material. Just in passing, let me ask you what is your theory as to what constitutes "Christian living?"

Rockefeller— . . . rather than speculation on the hereafter.

Comment—Do you believe in a hereafter? If you do, don't you think it is important enough a matter to speculate upon at least? As a plain business proposition would you invest money in any enterprise without "speculating on the hereafter" of that money? And do you expect a man to enter upon the business of moral living, and to invest all his actions in that business without considering the "hereafter" to which that moral life is directed? Is not the moral life directed to God, and is not the one great purpose of that life to be with God in the hereafter? And you wish to hear nothing about the hereafter!

No man will perform even a single intelligent action without forecasting the "hereafter" of that action, the end it is intended to reach. No traveler will board a train without finding out its destination. No architect will plan a building without knowing what it is to be used for. No army will start a drive without an objective. These are the very things that determine their actions and direct them. You discount the intelligence of your proposed followers by asking them to join you in a "Christian-

living” proposition and telling them at the same time that it isn’t worth while even speculating on the “hereafter” of it. Why, the only reason anyone takes up a moral life is the hereafter, and he wishes to know all he can about it. You call out “Join me!” and when asked whither bound, you answer, “Oh, let’s not think about that!”

When your first congregation assembles, may I suggest as an appropriate—though perhaps a somewhat rollicking—hymn, “We don’t know where we’re going, but we’re on our way”?

There is a disdainful fillip in your curt dismissal of “the hereafter” as though there were in your mind a doubt about there being a hereafter. As you make much of a Christ-like life, you doubtless value highly the words of Christ. Take, then, and read those tremendous chapters of Matthew, the twenty-fourth and the twenty-fifth—the very words of Christ. See how he “speculates” on the hereafter. Definite, absolute, final, he gives us the last alternative: “Come . . . possess the kingdom prepared for you,” or “Depart from me, you cursed into everlasting fire.”

In the face of such a certain and terrible alternative whose outcome means so much to every one of us, can anyone who really believes in Christ talk lightly of “speculating on the hereafter?” Or should not every action of life be closely measured by that end, definitely fixed upon it as a constant standard?

Rockefeller—It would be the church of all the people, of everyone who is fighting sin and trying to establish righteousness; the church of the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, the high and low—a true democracy.

Comment—A very good description of the Catholic Church! Why do you pass by that open door so often and not go into it and study it better?

I note that you admit to your church only those who are "fighting sin." You are under the necessity, therefore, of finding out from each applicant for admission whether he knows what "sin" is. Suppose his definition of sin disagreed with yours, who would then settle the question?

Suppose he said: "My definition of sin is, the possession of riches. In the true church there must be no 'rich and poor.' I demand that each man follow the words of Christ: 'Sell all thou hast and give to the poor. Then come, follow me.'" Would you let that man in?

If you admit him, you assent to his definition as correct. If his definition is correct, you are further bound to two other things. You are bound, under pain of sin, to distribute everything you have yourself; and you are also bound not to allow into your church anyone who will refuse to do likewise.

If you do not admit him, on what theory will you reject him? What principle will you lay down that will keep him out? But in your religion you have already stated that you do not "promote" theory, principle. You don't consider that.

Even if, contrary to the spirit of your religion, you did enunciate your principle of rejection, and the candidate then demanded, "By what authority do you assert that as a principle? My word is as good as yours"—what would you answer?

The only possible solution is to call in a third party to settle it. Then suppose neither of you two agreed with the third?

This is a miserable mess. But it is logically reasoned out from your own premises. Your "true democracy" begins to look like anarchy. And if you will ponder it carefully you will come to the only real solution—the Pope!

Rockefeller—Its ministers would be trained not only in the seminary but quite as much in life, with the supreme emphasis on life.

Comment—You have already tossed aside creed from your religion; you have said that theory is negligible, rule and etiquette optional. You now roll up your sleeves for a bout with the ministers. Poor ministers! All priests pity them. Every revivalist and promoter takes a savage pleasure in whacking them. “Swat the minister!” is their war cry. He seems to have no friends.

But why attack the ministers? Only a few paragraphs back you said the church of the future would find its “leaders among the laity.” If the laity are to be your “leaders,” why bother about the ministers? They are to be merely followers. Then why pick on them and incarcerate them in seminaries? This is adding insult to injury. Do they have to take a seminary course to learn the game of “follow the leaders?”

Rockefeller—It would be an important part of the preparation of each that he should spend months, years possibly, working with his hands in the fields or the shop, doing business in the store or office, so that he might not have merely a laboratory acquaintance with the problems of human life, but the practical knowledge which alone comes from actual experience and contact with them.

Comment—If this is the course you evolve for the ministers, what course do you contemplate for the really important men of your religion, the “leaders chosen from among the laity”? Are they not to be put to work among the masses to learn by “actual contact”? You neglect to mention what you have in store for them, but we anticipate with lively interest a

prescribed course in ground and lofty tumbling that will be memorable in its mirthfulness.

Meantime we can watch your ministers. It seems you allow them a very short, "unemphasized" seminary course. Why any seminary course at all? What will they study there? Not religious creed, rule, etiquette. Not religious principle or theory of any kind. All these you have, in one way or another, tabooed. You are not "promoting" these. True, you speak of "laboratory acquaintance with the problems of human life." But how do laboratory work without formulæ? How solve problems without a principle? How direct human life toward a goal when all idea of the hereafter is mere useless speculation?

Rockefeller—He should spend months, years possibly, working with his hands in the fields or the shop.

Comment—Evidently there wasn't much in the seminary for the minister's head to do, so you put him to work "with his hands" in the fields or the shop. And you do this with "supreme emphasis." So we may be on the lookout for results here if nowhere else.

The idea in itself is hardly original. A certain Mr. Squeers used it years ago in Dotheboys Hall. It did not succeed notably with children but it may with ministers. Let us see.

Apparently we are to have, in this arrangement, "specialty" ministers of a highly concentrated type. A few difficulties suggest themselves.

How do you propose to select your ministers for their respective spheres of operation? Will it be according to set physical, mental, moral tests? Or as your church is to be a "true democracy," will you let them choose what they like?

If you use the test system, how will you establish rules, ordinances for its observance? Ordinances are “voluntary rather than obligatory” as to their observance in your church.

But conceding the rules established, who is bound to believe in them? Creed is not a test in your church.

Even granting that the candidate believed in the rules, suppose he refuses to obey—refuses defiantly and most impolitely—what principle would you invoke to compel him? Suppose, for example, that your completed tests resulted in sending a minister out to be a glassblower, and he insisted on working at horticulture, upon what theory could you force him to follow the test decision? Theory is not “promoted” in your church.

And as all ritual, or religious etiquette, is merely a “sacred privilege,” he could be quite blunt in his refusal, too.

On the other hand, if you follow the go-as-you-please system, and allow your ministers to choose what they like, would there not be danger of choking traffic along some of your lines? The very human tendency would be to choose the light occupations and to avoid the more strenuous, especially as this is not to be their real life work, but only to give them the “vital touch.” An embarrassing congestion might be expected, say in the bank clerks’ or the window dressers’ section, while it would be difficult to recruit men for the drop-forge and soap factory divisions.

Would you use ordinance here, or would you simply give up?

Moreover, to do your work thoroughly, with “supreme emphasis,” in order to get into “vital touch” with every variety of difficulty, you must send ministers into every branch of industry. The difficulties

of a laundryman are not those of a rancher. A puddler faces obstacles unknown to a drug clerk. And so throughout the various occupations. To attain "practical knowledge from actual contact," ministers must be sent into each different field.

Accordingly, you must provide your circus, vaudeville, baseball ministers for the bright and chatty side of life as well as your chain-gang and your undertaker ministers for its mournful and penitential side. And between these extremes of black and white there should be ministers for every color of the spectrum of life. Considerably more than fifty-seven varieties of ministers!

Then as to the practical working out of the plan. How would you group and distribute your ministers? For example, if a lay member of the teamsters asked for spiritual help, he would not wish sent to him the minister who specialized in millinery. If a concert pianist called for soul aid, he would fiercely reject the specialist for sewer builders. Neither minister would have just the "vital touch" required.

But the whole thing turns to burlesque. What you have really planned is a comic "movie" scenario. The films would reap a harvest from this Gargantuan extravaganza. If laughter be the end you aim at, you have achieved a Horatian success. But to offer such travesty as a sincere and genuine religion is to make religion a byword among those who do not care for it, and to suppose all sense of humor lost among those who do. Why has it not occurred to you that the Catholic Church has possibly solved all your problems. All through your planning you have been passing up and down before her open door. Why not look in and consider her work? She has always been the church of the laborer and the poor. And

those who have best done her work have not, as a prerequisite, been laborers themselves at any time.

St. Peter Claver was the greatest friend the slaves ever had and he was never a slave. St. Elizabeth was a queen and the historic friend of the poor. The famous Curé of Ars never studied anything outside his priestly curriculum, and he was consulted by hundreds of thousands of every degree from all over the world. This is but a random mention of names that fill the pages of her history.

Why do these Catholic leaders get their results with an equipment the very opposite of your prescriptions? Because they lay "supreme emphasis" upon things which you never mention through all your uplifting scheme—the grace of God, prayer, a strict observance of the commandments in their personal lives, profound study and discipline of their own hearts. These, based upon, and vivified by, a creed which they believe divine, have given them that personal power you vainly crave to "mould the thought of the world."

Spiritual difficulties are not in the hands, but in the heart. And once a man understands and tames and purifies his own heart under the fixed guidance of God, he knows what to tell to any man by way of help and direction, whether that man be the humblest artisan or the ruler of an empire.

Rockefeller—Would that I had the power to bring to your minds the vision as it unfolds before me.

Comment—After the recent ministerial brainstorm, a pathologist would, we suspect, predict the next development to be some sort of "visions." Unfold, ye portals!

Rockefeller—I see all denominational emphasis set aside.

Comment—That isn't necessarily a vision. The Catholic Church sees the same thing as a sober fact.

Rockefeller—I see co-operation, not competition.

Comment—You are looking at the Catholic Church.

Rockefeller—I see strong churches, great economy in plant, in money, in service, in leadership.

Comment—For a person who gives theory the cold shoulder, you show quite a warmth of enthusiasm over visions. It may appear crude, right in the midst of a vision, to interrupt with a practical question. But one should like to know whether in this Plant-Money-Service-Leadership combination there are to be any ordinances, etiquette, principles, beliefs.

If not, how weld your organization into one piece? How conserve the plant, invest the money? How determine who are to be in the "leadership," who in the "service"? Must there not be constitutional voting, and therefore constitutional principles? Or will you simply appoint to office? What would be your rule of appointment in the latter instance?

These things are essential to the idea of any practical organization. If you do not have them you cannot go an inch ahead. Christ himself, you recollect, began with an ordinance: "Thou art Peter."

If you do have these, how can you pronounce "ordinance, ritual, creed, all non-essential"?

Rockefeller—Shall this vision be realized?

Comment—Regretfully we answer, "No." How could you expect it to be realized if you are going ahead without any belief in your plant?

Rockefeller—To build up an internal rather than an external religion was Christ's mission on earth.

Comment—Do you mean to say that there must be no externals? If so, what about your Plant-Money-Service-Leadership idea? Externals are pretty evident in that.

Christ's mission on earth was, as He said Himself, to establish a Church, that is to say, an internal religion which was necessarily to manifest itself externally, visibly; was to have a body as well as a soul. Christ was a visible person: He propagated his religion by external methods, preaching, teaching, miracles. He taught us to practice our religion externally by praying orally and with external reverence of body. He founded His Church on a visible person, "Thou art Peter," and He sent His apostles forth to generate religion in the world by external methods, "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them." External religion is necessary to internal, as the tree trunk is necessary for the sap that runs through it.

Rockefeller—Few and simple were the forms Christ set up or sanctioned, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper, but they were wonderfully beautiful and filled with sacred inspiration.

Comment—Getting ready to slay a few more "non-essentials" to the string accompaniment of a wonderfully beautiful phraseology.

Rockefeller—He (Christ) did not make baptism a condition of church membership, as is commonly assumed. Baptism was made the door of the church by man, such action being based on inferences from the words of Christ.

Comment—This is a cool piece of dogmatism from a man who scouts dogma. Where is your proof for this assertion? Or are we to take it as revelation? You say that it is "commonly assumed" as a result of "inferences" that Christ made baptism the door of the church. By what inferences do you uncommonly assume that man made baptism the door?

Rockefeller—The Lord's Supper is an ordinance rich in symbolic beauty.

Comment—If Christ ever taught anything plainly

in His whole career, it was the doctrine of the Eucharist recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John. You say it is a negligible affair, being merely a rule made by Christ—covering up your denial of Christ's teaching under the "far-be-it-from-me" phraseology. What is your proof that the Lord's Supper is a non-essential to the true Church?

Rockefeller—Can we imagine that if Christ came to earth again he would regard the observance of these individual beliefs as of sufficient importance to justify controversy among good men about doctrines?

Comment—If Christ came to earth again He would expect to find the Church which He established, and which He solemnly promised that the power of hell should not undermine. And He would find you sending out on all sides a proclamation that His Church had failed and that His word was not worth anything.

He would also find you engaged in controversy with "good men" and inculcating a doctrine that all doctrines are absurd.

Rockefeller—Let ordinance, creed, ritual, form, biblical interpretation, theology, all be used to enrich worship as each individual or separate church may find them helpful.

Comment—This is the big drive. Everything goes under here. First ordinance, creed, ritual were lopped off from religion; next, fundamental principles, theory, went by the board; then the Sacraments disappeared in a wave of gushing sentiment. And now the Bible and all theology go up as the magazine finally explodes. But there is still hope! Just as the ship is engulfed in the billows, up from the foam of the sea arises our salvation—Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., solemnly announcing the new gospel of Plant-Money-Service-Leadership, a gospel minus a creed minus a rule, minus a theology, minus a Bible!

It were tedious to point out in detail all the contradictions in your latest assertion. I shall mention but one self-destructive bit.

Rockefeller—Let biblical interpretation be used as each individual or each separate church may find it helpful to a fuller understanding of God.

Comment—It seems incredible that anyone who has even cursorily read the history of Protestantism for four hundred years and witnessed the steady disintegration of all religion left in the path of the “free bible” should have the temerity to introduce that very element into any organization that expects to be born alive. But you are trying it.

Let us consider how the New Religion would stand up in practice against the “helpful interpretation” idea.

Suppose the Plant-Money-Service-Leadership Religion fairly launched and a week old. Suppose the Plant is up, the Money down, the Service standing at attention, His Leadership in the chair. Suddenly, out from the service ranks steps a person bearing an open Bible in his hands. He speaks as follows:

“Your Leadership, I have assimilated your rule on bible reading. The rule is: Let each individual use biblical interpretation as he may find it helpful to a fuller understanding of God. I am an individual. I have interpreted my Bible and now I understand exactly what will be helpful in my work for God. I refuse any longer to be a Service man. I must be a Leader. I prove my right to the position from these helpful words taken verbatim from the holy book, words ‘wonderfully beautiful and filled with sacred inspiration.’ Here they are:

“I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God. Although I be rude in speech yet not in knowledge.

The truth of Christ is in me. And I live, no, not I, but Christ liveth in me."

"I am therefore 'another Christ.' And as the first Christ was a Leader, I cannot be anything else, and I will not."

A low murmur runs through the ranks of the Service. It rises steadily to a prolonged howl as they increasingly realize the "helpful" meaning of those biblical words, "rich in symbolic beauty."

"Neither will we be Service people any more," they cry. "We're all made to be Leaders and we're going to be. We find it so helpful."

Query: If you happened to be His Leadership, how would you solve this situation?

Do not say it is an imaginary situation. Protestantism has been doing nothing else but this in her churches for the past four hundred years.

Would you use a helpful bible quotation against them, and rising in your place say to the tempestuous multitude, "Peace, be still"?

They would help themselves to the same quotation and retort it on you.

Would you give orders that the Plant be closed?

But it would hardly seem to be "true democracy" to close the Plant because of a helpful biblical quotation. Besides, who would obey you? Each of these individuals has discovered the Bible telling him it is helpful to be a Leader, and Leaders don't obey orders. The Plant might be closed, indeed, but with His Leadership on the outside and the "Leaders" inside fighting it out in a battle royal.

Would you offer them money to retain your leadership? Money might help, but only for a while. They would start another riot for more money, taking it from you for your soul's good, since the Bible would tell them that "Money is the root of all evil." And

after another while there would be no more money to give.

Perhaps entering yourself as a Service man would settle it. But what is the use of one Service man in a church where all the others are leaders? You would die of clashing orders and consequent overwork.

In any alternative we should have a beautifully wonderful "movie" scenario. Or, with music, a very comic opera.

If you can find your way out of this bewildering, yet strictly "biblical" labyrinth, you have my congratulations.

Rockefeller—But God forbid that they should ever, any of them, be regarded as a substitute for that personal, spiritual relation between the soul and its God which is the essence of true religion.

Comment—A personal relation between the soul and its God is not an abstract thing. It means that the living soul must act, and act rightly, in God's service. But it cannot act without a belief and it cannot act rightly without the true belief. Such true belief is a creed. Creed, therefore, is a prerequisite to and an accompaniment of all correct action of the soul toward God, and consequently creed cannot be a "substitute for that personal relation of the soul to its God" because creed is a component part of the very relation itself and belongs to its essence.

The whole question is—and you evade all discussion of this point throughout—what is the true belief, the true creed? Without that there is evidently no possibility of proceeding to correct action, since all moral action is founded upon belief. Yet you call for correct action and discount creed.

That is, you throw creed out from every organization except your own projected organization. But in starting your own, the very first thing you do is to

establish a creed, and dictate it as your "terms of admission."

You declare ordinances optional of observance in every other church, but in your own church you visualize a plant, to be run on system, which is only another name for ordinances.

You make light of all theoretical religion, and yourself evolve a theory ending in a "vision."

You relegate ritual, or religious etiquette, to the background in other churches. In your own church you emphasize "service," which is unthinkable without etiquette, without ritual.

You take anything you please away from other churches, on the ground that they have no right to them. And then, like the jackdaw with the borrowed plumage, you use those very things yourself, call your performance a "vision," and in Delphic tones ask people to "catch the vision" as you throw it out to them in a shower of a million booklets.

By what authority do you act thus? Where is your proof for a single thing you say? Where are your credentials, your divine commission for this series of oracular pronouncements? Why have you been selected as the one herald of this visionary "new era"? And who is it that has selected you?

These questions will be asked by any one not too dazed at the highhandedness of your whole proceeding. But they are questions that a million showers of booklets will not answer.

