

Cath. Ch. - Missions BX 273

"GOING OUT INTO ALL THE WORLD



HAT ARE WE DOING

FOR

NON-CATHOLICS?

EVEN TO THE CONSUMMATION OF THE WORLD."

PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE. AND

"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."

BY
REV. ARTHUR M. CLARK.

NEW YORK:
The Catholic Book Exchange,
120 West 60th St.
1893.

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THE APOSTOLATE OF THE PRESS FOR THE CONVERSION OF NON-CATHOLICS.

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AEJ 9133

WHAT ARE WE DOING FOR NON-CATHOLICS?



WE live in an age of apostolic life, energy, and zeal. Although idolatry is now extinguished among civilized nations, yet the time is similar to the days of St. Paul. Material prosperity advances with rapid strides, and intellectual strength increases daily. The rich become richer, and the poor poorer as the times advance. As St. Paul went forth into just such a state of society, so we are called to meet this mass of people who either have no religion at all, or who at best have but a fragment of the truth.

There is the same class of men who are always inquiring for something new, like the men of Athens. There is the same class of men who have no God in the world, but are given up to self-indulgence. There is a large class of men and women who keep the natural law written on their hearts.

THE PAST.

The particular movements which produced this state of mind on religious matters are worth considering.

Three hundred and fifty years ago there came the great deluge of apostasy and rebellion against the Church. It flooded the western world; it rolled up in threatening billows to the gates of the Vatican. It demanded the overthrow of the Church, or else its subjection to the state. Like thunder from a clear sky came the answer—the great Council of Trent and its famous decrees of reformation. The echoes of that great reply to infidel demands still come back to us in the legislation of the Church, and will until the end.

Calmly, then, the Church went on her way with renewed life and vigor, strengthening the faith of her members; instructing them more thoroughly than for many generations before in the reasonableness and necessity of Catholic Truth.

Those who left the old ship of Peter, in a very short time were wrangling among themselves on the fundamental doctrines of faith. Before fifty years had passed they were split into a hundred sects, each making war on the others. To protest was

their life. Founded on principles of contradiction and of opposition, they could exist only by fighting.

To-day this revolt has worked itself out. It has had its day. Like the torrent which sweeps down the mountain side in the spring, and is dried up by the summer sun until no sign of moisture is left, so calm reason and faith in a higher power have dried up the passions of men, and the awful day of ruin and desolation is closed.

THE PRESENT.

Round about us to-day stand a crowd of people hungry for the word of God. Their hearts are deeply religious, but they have no sense of the supernatural, and with mere natural religion they are never satisfied. They need a revelation from God; they know not where to find it.

They must be brought to investigate the truth, the beauty, the goodness, and the divine authority of the Catholic Religion. There is in many of these people a deep-seated, ingrained prejudice against us; it is for us to break down its walls. To these and to all others who are non-Catholics we are sent.

Here, then, is the urgent work of the day in the religious world. The time has passed when Catholics can sit down calmly and fold their hands while men are perishing by hundreds of thousands for the want of the Catholic Faith. The time has passed when Catholics can be content merely to hold the faith and teach it to the favored children of the faithful. No longer do we dread the axe, the gibbet, or the hangman's rope; no longer do men drive us to mountain fastnesses and caves of the earth to practise our religion; no longer reigns bigotry so supreme over men's minds that they will not listen to us.

The day of aggressive spiritual warfare is again at hand. The time has come for action; the hour has struck, and we are called upon by God to sally forth from our strongholds and preach to unbelievers the faith once delivered to the saints.

There has as yet been no organized plan of campaign. It is for us to arouse ourselves to the task, for we alone can exclaim with St. John, "We *know* that we are of God."

This is the providential mission of the Church in the United

States—the conversion of the people; this is the work laid down by her Divine Master. It has been the work of Catholics in every age, and it must be their work in this.

Little has yet been done. The comparatively few converts who come to us every year are not, as a rule, the fruit and result of the labors of evangelic and apostolic men and women who have devoted themselves especially to this work. Many have come to us in spite of us—we must confess it with shame and sorrow. They have come after months of solitary study and thought, in spite of discouragement; in the face of awful obstacles they have made the sacrifice.

It is the grace of God pure and simple which has led them on; they have been assisted by no earnest work of ours. But now the time has arrived when we are able to say to such souls who are timidly standing without: "Here are we the messengers of Christ; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

It was a thin, small stream that flowed under the virgin hands of Bernadette at Lourdes; but it became a great stream whose waters are spread in all the earth. So the few heroic souls who have come to us are the earnest of a great flood of conversions; they are the first-fruits of a harvest of converts who shall in a few years be gathered into the fold by the zealous apostolic laborers whom God is sending forth into the field to reap.

The man who is not alive to this work, or in earnest about it, is dead to the day in which he lives; is not alive to the providential lesson of the hour. Almighty God will ask of this generation, when they stand before him in the day of judgment, "What did you do to teach the Christian truths to the non-Catholics who lived with you when you were in your trial-state? It is for us to make answer now. Let us arise in our might, the might of truth, conscious of our strength, confiding in God, and go forth to win the battle, fighting against error.

THE FIELD OF THE HARVEST.

The last census shows the population of the United States to be a little over sixty-four millions. Of this great multitude scarcely one-seventh profess the Catholic Faith. We are not in

the field to discuss the reasons why there are few or many who are annually lost to the Church.

We know our numbers, and that which concerns us is, What means shall we take to gain the remainder? This remainder of the population, fifty-six millions, is made up of two classes: those who are and call themselves Protestants, and those who are of no religious belief at all.

This latter class is growing larger day by day. The uncertainty of teaching in non-Catholic pulpits drives daily great numbers into unbelief. Pleasure, vice and its attractions, placed within the reach of all, are likewise doing their share in making unbelievers. We stand as a small body indeed, but we should never forget how the Church went forth in the fourth century into a world of pagans, and with what results. But we have before us an audience to-day that is ready, eager, and anxious to listen to what we have to say. They have heard of us from our enemies long enough; that their tales concerning us were fables, they are certain.

Now, what is the truth concerning us? is the question which we are called upon to answer. The American people are fair-minded, ready to look at both sides of a question before they make up their mind. No longer will they submit to be blinded by passion, nor will they let the incubus of any bugbear rest on their minds.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE ?

EXAMPLE.

Some will, no doubt, urge that we should first sanctify our own people and make them what they ought to be. This is no doubt a pressing need, and it is certain that of all the obstacles in the way of the conversion of our country none is greater than the scandalous lives and shocking example of some bad Catholics.

Intemperance and saloon-keeping are Catholicity's deadliest foes. We profess a pure and perfect religion, and unbelievers are aware of our profession; and the non-practising Catholic is not the weakest enemy to the spread of truth. One thing that attracted men to the Catholic religion in the early ages of the

Church was the examples of soberness and charity which Christians manifested in their lives.

The heart thrills with joy when one contemplates a vast multitude of good Catholic families in harmony and peace, dwelling together. Into these households never comes the demon of discord, but the angel of peace continually abides within them. There daily arises the sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving from the family altar. There mutual forbearance prevents wordy quarrels and unseemly disputes. There temperance and sobriety reign, and kindness and gentle influence rule where harshness and evil-speaking would quickly make a household of Satan. From these families comes forth no child to fill a drunkard's grave, a felon's cell, or the murderer's chair. From such families come forth the men and women who love the Law of God, and respect the law of the land for God's sake.

This, then, shall be the first means of converting unbelievers: by showing ourselves by our example to be the true disciples of Jesus Christ.

BY TEACHING.

The next means of advancing the Catholic Religion among our non-Catholic brethren is by teaching it to them. There is every opportunity for Christians to meet unbelievers. They are with them in business, in work, and in recreation. Questions are asked everywhere about our Faith, and we all ought to be ready to give a reason for the faith that is in us. If we would take such an active interest in our Religion that these people would be moved to question us about it, how great is the good that could be accomplished!

When a Mission is given in the parish to which we belong, we could easily ask our non-Catholic friends to go with us. Converts are often made in this way, as well as by invitations to sermons and lectures likely to interest honest inquirers.

THE APOSTOLATE OF THE PRESS.

The Press of this country is busy. It daily pours forth tons of worthless and evil literature to satisfy the depraved intellectual palate of the reading public. There is much also that is good, very good, which is constantly being put into print.

But when we contemplate the possibilities that are before us, and the good that can be done by the spread of first-class Catholic literature, we are fired with enthusiasm for the task.

A little band of half a dozen, who are willing to give themselves and all that they have for the glory of God, could, in a very short time, flood this country with good Catholic literature at a reasonable figure.

There need be no difficulty about the books, pamphlets, and

leaflets proper for the purpose. There are plenty of them now in existence. What we want is organized effort and a little money to secure local distribution.

MISSIONS TO NON-CATHOLICS.

This is to be the work which will make a noise in the world. It will be the trumpet-sound of the advance-guard of the hosts of the Lord coming to take captive and bind with the sweet yoke of Christ the sinner and the unbeliever. Let us, with the approbation of the bishop and at the request of the pastors, go into the smaller towns and there, in halls hired for the purpose, speak to unbelievers all the words of Christ. To meet their difficulties, their needs and wants, God must raise up men fit for the work. These we shall see coming forth, even as St. John the Baptist, St. Francis and St. Dominic, did in their days, bringing the good tidings of peace. These people we must meet also in private and talk with them kindly, and bear with their ignorance or prejudices concerning the truth, distributing missionary literature everywhere.

This is the work which is about to begin in the coming autumn. We hope at some future day to chronicle the success which shall meet its first advances.

PRAYER.

"Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name he will give it you." That is to say, whatsoever we ask concerning salvation shall be ours.

Let every Catholic, then, who desires the conversion of his country pray daily for that end. Prayer can avail when naught else is of any use. St. Monica prayed seventeen years, and the world and the Church gained a St. Augustine. Let a million of faithful souls put their prayers up to God daily, and what shall we not be able to do? "It is time now to arise from sleep; the night is far spent; the day is at hand: let us cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light"; let us go forth, then, in our might of truth, with the strength and courage of our conviction; and by example, teaching, preaching, and prayer convert to the faith the greatest country in the world. Never went missionaries to a land more easy to convert. Never came they before a more fair-minded audience. We cannot fail. "God wills it," and it shall be done.

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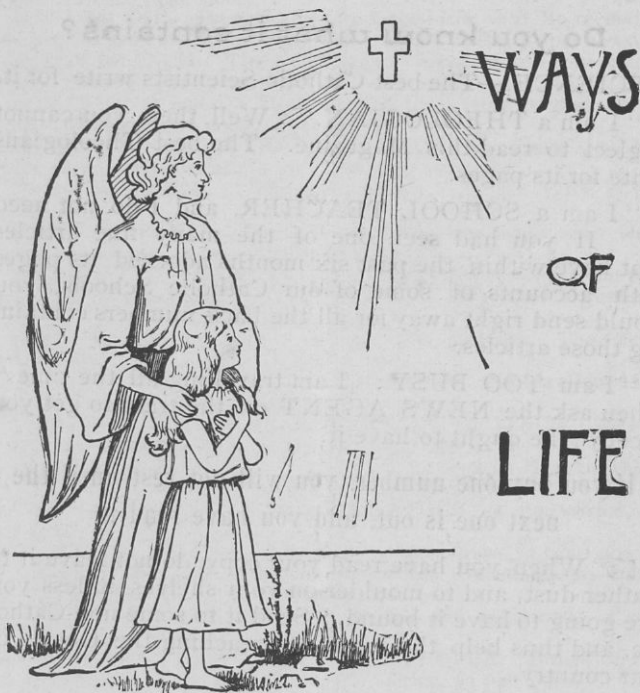
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