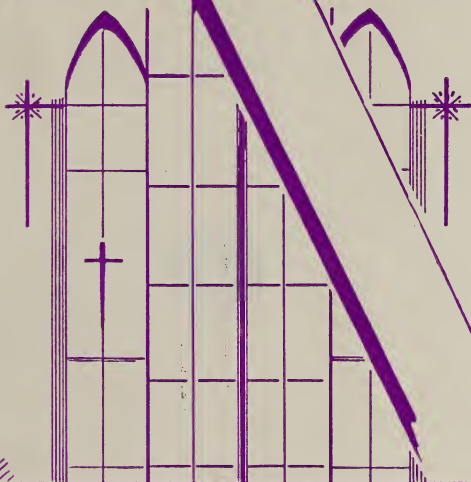


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ADP0942

Catholicism *Censor or Guide?*



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Nihil Obstat:

JOHN TRACY ELLIS,
Censor of Books.

Imprimatur:

PATRICK A. O'BOYLE,
Archbishop of Washington.

April 8, 1954.

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IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A.
BY THE PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

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CATHOLICISM

Censor or Guide?

Is the Church the Enemy of Freedom?

A YEAR had passed since I'd met the Sanders family, the mother and three daughters, who had questioned me, on our first meeting, about the Catholic Church. A year of correspondence had developed into friendship, but it had not satisfied their curiosity on the Church. My journey to their city brought a "must" invitation to stop and see them. As their letter remarked, "we want to check a couple of things."

The train slowed and jolted to a stop. I saw the four Sanders standing on the platform; they looked like a female quartet ready to sing a welcome song. I recognized the impulsive Lynn as the girl breaking rank. She ran to me and took my hand. "Father Gordon, it's wonderful to see you again!"

Mrs. Sanders, Betty and Rita were close behind her. The mother smiled broadly and greeted me. "Welcome, Father. We had planned to do this in seniority fashion, but, I'm afraid that Lynn is not the organizable type."

We drove to the church where I was to give a lecture that evening. Betty, at the wheel, gave me a quick commentary on the small town's outstanding features.

Rita interrupted the tour-talk by asking, "How long are you going to be with us, Father?"

"Just today and this evening."

The family chorused disappointment. "When do we get to see you?" complained Rita.

"Yes," Lynn added. "When do we get to ask all these questions we've been saving?"

"Ask them now," I answered, turning to face the two sisters in the rear seat. "But I didn't imagine that there were any more to ask."

Mrs. Sanders shook her head. "Father, this house alone has need of an information center. Since meeting you the girls have talked religion, religion, religion until I think it has surpassed *boys* as their favorite topic."

"Not exactly," Betty said quickly. "Let's say they're even. But, seriously, Father, will we have some time to talk with you?"

"I promise that as soon as I am settled at the rectory I'll be with you."

They decided to wait for me as I went to the church and arranged for the evening's talk. Proceeding to the Sanders' home, I was hardly over the doorstep when the questions began.

The Church and the State

"Our greatest problem, now," explained Betty as we walked into the sitting room, "is the Church and our being able to remain free, white and nearly twenty-one." She indicated her sisters and said, "We can't follow Mother just like that." She snapped her fingers loudly.

“Follow . . . ?”

Mrs. Sanders smiled happily. “Yes, Father, that was to be my surprise. I have been back in the Church for the last few months. Christmas, in fact, was the actual day.” The mother became soberly reflective. “But the girls have not seen their way, although they are very happy for me.”

“Oh, I could see it,” said Lynn. “But I’m afraid of walking into a cage.” She shook her head apologetically. “That is not my description. My teacher has used it when speaking of the Church.”

“Where does he find the Church a cage?”

“In almost all respects, I guess,” said Lynn. “I think the main problem is his harping on the Church as a danger to the traditional idea of Church and State being separate.”

Betty prodded her sister’s memory. “Don’t forget his remarks about the Church taking over if she came into power.”

“Tell your teacher to recheck his American history,” I rejoined. “He’ll find the present theory about this great wall between Church and State is not the tradition of our country.”

“But, Father,” said Betty, “he wouldn’t lie!”

“I didn’t say he would, but he could read the wrong book, couldn’t he?”

“He teaches history,” claimed Lynn.

“I wouldn’t care if he wrote it,” I answered. “Let him remember the Constitution does not separate Church and State on either side of a great wall. Our foundation was that there be no established church, not that the State be completely divorced from any

contact with religion and the business of God. Our nation is based on a motto, 'In God We Trust' and that means faith in Him and life by Him."

Betty remained puzzled by my contradicting the Church's critic. "I wonder why he says the opposite?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "I don't know, Betty, but I do know that our government was not founded on this idea of a wall between Church and State. The aim in the American beginnings was to avoid a state religion, not an attempt to avoid having anything to do with religion."

"What is feared, perhaps," suggested Rita, "is the Catholic Church trying to worm in and take over."

"I think it is the real issue," I remarked. "And this 'traditional separation' idea is being developed to be used as a club in case Catholics get any ideas."

"Does the Church have any such ideas?"

"No, of course not!" I made a gesture of impatience. "Why don't some of these people go to Catholic sources once in a while? There are plenty of statements by Catholic bishops and leaders made over the last hundred years that clearly set our position."

"Maybe," said Rita, "the critics ignore them and just work on the prejudiced views?"

"'Maybe' is a mild word," I answered. "There is no doubt about it, they do ignore Cardinal Gibbons' definition or Archbishop Ireland's remarks or any other Catholic's words that clearly deny any desire on our part to change our government's guarantee of freedom of worship."

The girls agreed that they had never heard this idea or the names of the men.

"I'm sure you didn't," I said tartly. "You've heard what our critics want you to hear . . . the one-sided, lopsided version that makes a bogey-man of the Church."

I smiled to relax the girls from the seriousness which had come over them. "Just count it as learning a little more technique about handling criticism of the Church."

"You mean, wait it out and check?" asked Rita. "Is that it?"

I agreed. "Don't jump to condemnation on hearsay conclusions of uninformed critics."

Rita smiled broadly. "I like that. It sums up about all the approach we get from so many people."

Spain Proves a Problem

"I think much of the fear about the Church and our freedom," admitted Betty, "comes from the business of Spain."

"What did Spain do?" I inquired.

Betty made a gesture of helplessness. "Oh, you know . . . their way of handling the liberties of people who are not Catholic. There's no freedom of worship. . . ."

"Wait a minute! There is so freedom of worship in Spain!" I tried to sketch the historical background of Spain and concluded, "The religious issue in Spain is peculiarly that country's own. It is not the Catholic Church's."

"But it comes up so often," said Lynn. "One gets to wondering."

“Yes, one gets to wondering . . . wondering ‘why?’ . . . Could it be the critics haven’t heard of Ireland where the same Catholicism flourishes and religious liberty does too?”

“It is the same old story,” said Mrs. Sanders, “isn’t it?”

I told her it was and then turned to the girls. “Well . . . ?”

“I’m satisfied,” said Betty. “I see that Spain’s problem is not fairly taken as the Catholic Church’s position. I guess there is no real fear for religious liberty from the Church.”

“Don’t guess,” I cautioned. “You go and check any of my statements carefully. You’ll find that America has nothing to worry about. I think you’ll find the Church is the greatest champion liberty has.”

Lynn stood up, as if in argument. “Yet, it seems the whole nature of the Church is restrictive. I must admit for myself that I wonder why it is that when I attempt to do something with my Catholic friends, there is always a problem about what the Church says.”

“You mean that when you want to play tennis or go to a dance or watch a game . . . ?”

“No, no, Father,” interrupted the girl. “I mean the Church forbids them certain books or movies or philosophies . . . it just seems that being a Catholic means you are no longer a free person.”

I waited until Lynn had sat down. “First, I think that you should tell me what you mean by ‘being free.’”

Lynn hesitated and then with the help of the others,

she stated, "I think that 'being free' means you may think or hold or do what you wish."

"Let's say a person can live as they please," added Betty.

"You don't mean that," I countered, "actually you're defining license, not liberty. To do what you please is an excessive and abusive way of life. If we all lived that philosophy the world we live in would be a jungle of beasts."

"I didn't mean it so fully," agreed Betty. "I know we must have some laws and controls. . . ."

"And, you demonstrated that on the ride here," I said quickly. "I notice that you stop at lights, drive on the right side of the road, don't park in a prohibited zone, stop at blind corners. . . ."

Mrs. Sanders laughed. "I wonder if Betty does that all the time. . . . She strikes me as a very impatient driver."

"Oh, no, Mother, I do not run through lights and I do keep the other restrictions," answered the girl firmly. "I don't endanger other people's lives or property. I am careful about that."

"Therefore, you agree by this that some laws are necessary," I argued. "That proves you think laws are good to curb you and other people. You are free to drive a car but not as you or anyone else may please. You may drive freely but only as the State permits you to do so by law. In her wisdom, she can legislate against your so-called doing-as-you-please freedom, can't she?"

Silently, the three girls looked at each other as if disbelieving that the answer could be that simple.

Betty spoke first. "Maybe we are getting lost on this traffic problem. What you say seems nothing more than common sense but it is not touching the problems about the Church."

I lighted a cigarette and Mrs. Sanders placed an ashtray at my chair. "Pardon me, Father, I'll get lunch while you try to help my confused children." She turned as she started out of the room. "I'm sorry that I have been responsible for so much of this, but I pray they 'see' soon."

"Prayer is the answer," I commented to the girls. "But let's work on this problem. Remember this point on liberty. It cannot and never does exist in any good society without benefit of law. We call this country the 'Land of Liberty' but we began our democracy under a Constitution and we continue under that rule and under hundreds of national and local restrictions."

The Scope of Religion

Lynn spoke for all. "I guess we hadn't thought of this angle. But I still think there is a problem with the Church and her ideas on morality and philosophy and belief and things like that!"

"There does seem to be an intolerant attitude about the Church," offered Betty, "on so many matters that are not in the scope of religion."

I looked to each one in turn before answering. "Fix this rule in your approach to the Church. The Catholic Church never says anything about what must be

done or what may not be done in any sphere that is not religious.”

Tapping out my cigarette I finished strongly, “If the Church makes a statement on a certain phase of life, don’t jump to the conclusion that she is out of bounds. Study the case and learn an important fact . . . the matter spoken on *must* affect Faith or Morals or the Catholic Church would not be remarking on it. You’ll find, in these matters, that the ‘situation’ spoken on, not the Church, is out of bounds.”

Lynn Sanders must have been waiting for me to stop because she broke in almost as I ended my sentence. “Father, where I’m confused is on this business of freedom of thought or philosophy. Why can’t I hold a way of life that I please. . . . Why can’t I go to a movie that I think I’d like to see or read a book which attracts my attention?”

She threw up her hands and slouched deeper into the corner of the couch. “If I became a Catholic I’d feel that I’d gone into a mental and social straight-jacket!”

“Whoa!” I shouted. “You’ve just covered all your problems in that breathless dash of words. Give me portions of the thing.”

Betty swung a book out of the case near her chair. “Here’s one portion. This book, I’ve learned from my boy friend, is forbidden. The Church in forbidding it exercises thought control. You have an Index or list of such books. How would I be free to hold what I want, how could I be free to have a philosophy that pleases me?”

“You’re not free to hold what you want in terms of

truth versus evil," I answered quickly. "That's the rubbish philosophy of modernists, having a philosophy that pleases them. Actually it is not philosophy. Most of the so-called philosophies are theories designed for self-gratification."

Betty was surprised at my vehemence. "I don't mean hold a theory of evil. . . ."

"Yes, you do, ultimately and logically," I broke in. "Unfortunately, too few liberals are logical in their conclusions or even make any conclusions." Now I stood and paced between the chairs, swinging to point at Betty. "Push your remark on holding what you please to its definite conclusion, where does it lead?"

"It wouldn't lead me wrong, Father, I'm sure," she said.

"But, this must be thought of as for all people, not just you. Allow all people to hold what they please, and you have anarchy in the world!"

Rita giggled at her sister's puzzled expression. "It means, Betty, that if you say people can hold what they please, think what they please and live by this grab bag of philosophies, then, everyone becomes boss."

"Right," I said, "and Russia has as much value in forcing slavery on the world as we think we have in offering democracy. If you and you and you," I pointed to each girl, "want to live as you please, then we have three standards of procedure and each could be opposed to the other."

I sat back in my chair and waited to see if any of them would think this out. Rita evidently had been following most closely. She said, "And that means

that on any given point we could clash and each demand her way is the only way."

"Then I come along," said Mrs. Sanders as she stood in the doorway, "and settle things with a few well-chosen words or well-timed taps."

"See!" I cried, "the voice of domestic authority setting up a standard of conduct, acting as referee, censor and guide." I turned to the girls and asked, "What was that criticism you had about the Catholic Church?"

The Church Is a Family

Lynn offered her reasons for the family's acceptance of authority. "We have grown up together and have accepted the wisdom of Mother and her right to direct us to keep order in the family."

"And by that statement," I rejoined, "you have come close to expressing the principle behind the Catholic Church's legislation for her people."

"Is that the meaning of the term 'Holy Mother Church?' " asked Betty.

"Yes. Catholics form a family . . . a religious family." I tapped the arm of the chair for emphasis. "Get that expression and you grasp much of our way of life. The fabric of Church life is knit of the relationships that make up any family."

I leaned forward to continue. "You, Lynn, said you accept the wisdom of your mother and her right to direct you to keep order in the family, isn't that so?"

"Yes. . . ."

"Catholics . . . real Catholics accept the wisdom of their Mother, almost 2,000 years of wisdom and ex-

perience and her right from God to direct them . . . and all this is accomplished on a family basis." I sat back and waited for their comments.

"We sure got off the books and their prohibition, didn't we?" remarked Betty.

"Maybe," I said, "but we've come close to a fundamental principle on this difficulty you people have with the Church and her regulations. We can answer any question once some principles are settled and once you see the true cast of this so-called liberty you're chanting about."

The girls nodded for me to go on. "In what we've said and in this simple domestic government, you know that no one can hold ruthlessly a theory that says, 'I am my own god and my own law . . . to think as I please and do as I please.'"

"It sounds very selfish, doesn't it?" Rita remarked.

"It is very selfish and self is usually the basis for all 'cracked' theories," I agreed. "The world has unbalanced the whole equation of liberty. The principle is something like this: You are free, made so by God, to search and learn and study Him as Truth. That freedom to know Him is your right against all the evil and error that might try to pervert you."

I watched the three young faces as they pondered this idea and continued, "You are free as Americans, and guaranteed so, by safeguards of law and right. Your freedom is guarded against any political evil whether tyranny or socialism or communism."

I pointed to Rita. "We start in 'freedom' as Americans and live our belief and practice of it under guarantees, don't we?"

“Yes . . . we’re founded in the belief of the rightness of our government.”

“Didn’t you ever think it strange,” I asked all of them, “that we hold there is a deposit of truth by which we are free as Americans. We accept the ability of the government to guarantee this to us—but, we deny the same possibility with God?”

God Guarantees Truth

They did not seem to catch the idea. I restated it. “Your government makes you free against the evils of tyranny. Don’t you think God who made all men makes them free of all evils and error by His revealed Truth?”

“Gosh, Father, that sounds like a big statement,” said Rita, “but I think I grasp some of it. In matching our freedom as Americans with our freedom in God’s truth, you’re saying that in both cases we are holding “Truth” and we *should be* defending it against error or attack. . . .”

“Yes. . . .”

“But, actually in the matter of religion, we’re acting as if there is no truth and fooling around with errors. We’re really fighting to hold or live the very evils against which Truth should be defended.”

Betty joined in, “You mean we cherish democracy and protect the truth of it dearly. In religion, we scoff at revealed truth and suspect it constantly?”

Lynn made her comment mockingly, “You could have saved a trip, Father, if you’d known they were going to take over.”

I assured her I was glad to hear the sisters developing my idea. "A little more balancing of our inconsistencies would help us all."

Betty sighed as she stood to check if her mother needed help. "You know, I'm still waiting for the answer to the Index of forbidden books."

You should be able to figure it out, now," I answered. "We are free in truth and hold it as a deposit from God. . . . Our purpose should be to defend and protect truth and preserve it for others. . . ."

Betty raised her hand as if asking permission to speak. "I've got it!" she exclaimed.

"What?" asked Rita, looking as if she expected Betty had been visited suddenly by the Holy Spirit.

"I've caught the idea about the books and why they're forbidden."

"Oh . . ." said Rita, disappointedly, "is that all?"

The older sister chided her. "Listen, I'm happy to be able to see some little part of all this after months of confusion."

"Well, what is the answer," asked Lynn. "I don't see even that little part." Her face registered resentment. The look could have been because she was piqued at just this point or she could be resenting the whole cast events seemed to be taking.

"The answer is that this book or any book is not forbidden to Catholics because the Church thinks she has anything to fear or hide. It is forbidden because once you agree that there is a deposit of truth and the Church holds it, there is no sense in reading what is false or contradictory of the Truth."

When she finished, I inquired, "This boy you are

going with . . . what's his particular interest in the Index?"

Betty blushed slightly. "I'm going with a Catholic. . . . That was to be my surprise." She continued quickly when it appeared the other sisters were readying to make some quip about the boy. . . . "Tom said that I shouldn't read the book because it's on the list of forbidden books."

Lynn seemed anxious to make the argument more pointed. "How could we as Catholics ever know what was in such great books as this?"

"Would it be necessary for you to know what was in it?" I asked.

"In Betty's case the answer is yes. She's majoring in history. That is a great history book. I think she should be conversant with its contents and treatment." Lynn had taken over the argument for her older sister.

I wondered as I answered, what Lynn's own great interest was in this problem. "If Betty needs to read that book . . . let's say she were a Catholic and the problem came up in her course and it was necessary . . . she could have permission to read it."

"What?"

"Oh, you don't need to have me repeat that," I chided. "Except for rankly perverse books, permission can be obtained to read any prohibited book that is necessary in study or research."

Betty was most surprised of all. "Well, what's all this fuss about the Index?"

"Betty, what is all the 'fuss' about a lot of things where the Church is concerned?" I asked acidly. "I

told you a year ago that the Church is a reasonable society. You've worked on this problem of the Church for a year and with all I've said or written, you've continued accepting the 'slam' or half-truth on the Church."

"I don't know, Father," the oldest sister replied. "A problem comes up and we settle down to study it and resentment or prejudice must sit down with us."

Lynn was not going to be so reasonable. "I still wonder about many things. Why can't I rid myself of the feeling that the Church restricts people in many ways?"

The Reasonable Index

I was beginning to think that with the surprises I had received, so far, Lynn was providing the greatest of all. Her truculence was a developed thing; not part of the youngster I remembered meeting a year before. Of all, she had seemed the most tractable.

"Lynn, the Catholic Church is not restricting your freedom to do anything you want," I remarked easily. "You're not a Catholic and I can't see why you are getting so upset about things. Why not let the Catholics follow their guide and you go on doing what you please? They are apparently happy in their way . . . and you will be happy in yours."

Her voice was low and even as she countered. "I mean if I were a Catholic, I would be hampered. . . ."

"If you were a true Catholic," I broke in, "you would not consider yourself hampered."

Lynn was not satisfied. "Why not read the books to know what's been written? . . . to know what's

going on in the world? Why couldn't a Catholic read them just to see if his religion is the right one?" She closed her eyes as if tired with the attempt to get all her questions out. "Why hide the possibility of other truths from Catholics? What has the Church to fear that she makes such a list?"

"Whew!" exclaimed Rita. "Time out between halves, after that!"

"No," I said. "Let's answer each of those quickly and finally." I ticked off the points. "If you need to read them, you can have permission. If the reading is mere curiosity, then your demand is as silly as the demand that we try out a disease when healthy to find out what's going on in the world of sickness.

"A Catholic doesn't have to read them to find out whether or not his religion is right. He believes the Divinity of Christ and that Christ came as a Divine Teacher to establish His Church. When a Catholic can have God teach him religion in a divinely-instituted Church, it is an inanity to send him to a mere man's book to ascertain if it has something God didn't teach!

"And no one hides the possibility of 'other truths' from Catholics. Since Christ has said, 'I am the Way, the TRUTH and the Life' . . . and exhorted, 'Go . . . teach what I command.' . . . Tell me, what book is going to come up with 'other truths' after God comes as All Truth?"

Mrs. Sanders was standing in the doorway as I paused. She signalled with her eyes that she was ready for lunch.

I nodded and went into my last sentence. "The simple reason for the Index is not that the Church

has anything to hide, but rather that the Church, as a good mother, labels poison as poison. The Index is a protection, not a prohibition."

We moved to the dining room in silence. Mrs. Sanders pointed out my place. I sat at the head of the table, Betty and Rita on my right, Lynn to my left. No one remarked anything on the answers that I'd given, so I began eating. I saw that Betty and Rita were acceptably inclined, but Lynn had a brooding look. It was evident that she desired to go back to the discussion but wanted one of her sisters to commence it.

Mrs. Sanders noticed the silence. "This is very unusual and more so, Father, considering that the girls couldn't wait until you got here."

Good Seal for Good Shows

Betty explained the lull. "We were going into some heavy seas toward the end, Mother." She swung to me as a new thought occurred to her. "Father, I don't think I ever understood the idea behind the Index as a protection. I see what you mean by it. Is that true of all the prohibitions in the Church?"

"It's true of them in life, Betty, not just in the Church. When you are forbidden to smoke in a fire-trap of a building, you are not being restrained from your right to smoke, you are being protected from the possibility of burning to death."

"The Legion of Decency fits into this idea also, I suppose?"

"The principle we've discussed covers all these

things," I said. "The Legion of Decency is not so much a protest against bad films as a positive thing—a seal of approval for good ones."

Mrs. Sanders asked what was the peculiarity in people that made them demand they be able to see or know the shoddy and cheap phases of life. "They complain because they cannot see adultery or license depicted on the screen or stage."

"I think it is a loss of that sense of the need to hold Truth," I answered. "And by 'hold' I mean just that, hang on to it against its enemies, error and sin."

"Sadly enough," I commented further, "the children of the family of God pout and stamp their feet when protecting them demands prohibitory gestures. They resent being children of God, which is an honor and dignity, and then go out and act up as children of the world, which is a definite sign of immaturity."

Lynn came in with the discord. "But a child *is* a child! Maybe that is what I resent about the Church, the way she treats adults as children."

"The word 'child' can be well used," I explained, "under many circumstances, and be very apt. I know nothing about surgery and I think if I began to learn it and someone said I was a child at the study, I'd agree with them."

Mrs. Sanders bolstered the example. "You girls are all children about many things . . . take that from me . . . even though you think you are so grown up. You're children in this matter of housework. You act as children in many matters that confront us here. All your life you will find that in much of life, you are

still in the undeveloped, untutored state of being a child.”

She waited until they all looked at her. “I don’t say that in criticism of you. I am admitting that I see in my own life many aspects that remain immature or undeveloped. Once I would have demanded that I be considered adult . . . but I’ve learned the hard way.” She paused and lowered her head . . . I’ve learned my limitations and the fact that there are, in many fields, a greater wisdom and experience than mine.”

Betty and Rita were looking at their mother as she ended her little speech. Lynn was turned to me and as I caught her eye, she asked. “Father, I think some Catholics refuse to allow the Church to treat them as children. I know Catholics who resent it.” She waited to impress me with her conclusion. “When I bring up these matters of the restriction they say that they are not going to be dictated to by the Church.”

“I think that proves my point, doesn’t it?” I said.

“How? . . . It appears to prove Catholic resentment.”

“Lynn,” I replied. “I can admit that some people who call themselves ‘Catholic’ go against the laws of the Church. I don’t think that a Catholic doing wrong proves that the laws are wrong. I think if it proves anything, it demonstrates that the Church does not destroy this freedom you talk about.”

Rita was smiling appreciatively as she caught the idea. “That’s good, isn’t it? These complainers about ‘destroyed freedom’ actually show it is not de-

stroyed. They are 'free' to complain or moan or criticize and they are 'free' to go ahead and do things against the Church."

"Yes, they do wrong," I continued for her, "going against the laws of the Church, but they do prove freedom exists in the Church. Their actions show they are not forced to remain faithful and those who do remain faithful, do so freely."

Lynn showed plainly that she did not like the way the discussion had moved. When her mother stood to clear the table, she rose and started to pick up the dishes. She affected not to hear Rita making a summation for all of them.

Betty said she had no more questions. "I see the idea of protection and I know that I can read the books that may be necessary by getting an okay. What complaints are left?"

"Oh, nothing! Just the fact that you have to admit that the Catholic Church has the 'deposit of Truth' and the authority to tell you what you can or cannot read. . . ." Lynn called this into the room from the doorway. "Admit that and everything's fine," she said reaching the table.

Rita made a face at her sister. "Lynn, that doesn't add anything to what we've discussed."

"Why doesn't it? I would think it was the whole issue."

"It's not the whole issue at present," said Rita hotly. "It happens to be another argument entirely. We've been talking about the prohibition of books in the Catholic Church, not whether the Church is the only Church or the true Church."

"That's right," joined Betty. "Catholics believe the authority of the Church. Father indicated that they freely accept her as their guide and if they do, they accept her right to protect them in matters where they may not be too sharp."

The Intolerantly Tolerant

Lynn attempted to make a rejoinder but Rita stopped her. "Just as you think you have a right to do as you please, Catholics have a right to do as they please and it pleases them to accept the teaching of their Church!" Rita snorted disgustedly as she ended. "I get so fed up on the intolerance of all you screamers *against* intolerance! You're free . . . or so you think . . . but the Catholics aren't supposed to be allowed to live their Church's life freely!"

I signalled my agreement and said, "Rita is correct, however, and only a Catholic knows how correct. Just what is the problem with the liberals or freedom-lovers? They maintain their great principle of 'live and let live' but can't seem to abide the Catholic Church as a sharer in that. They can cry 'toleration for all' and as soon as they see the great family of the Catholic Church they start carping and criticizing. It is a mystery."

Rita was nodding her head as I spoke. "And the real irritant for me, Father, is that each thing they criticize is something they are advocating or practicing in their own spheres of influence."

"You mean I would have something like an Index of Forbidden Books?" asked Lynn. "Or keep someone from doing something they might want to do?"

"You have an Index and you accept it without a murmur!" flung out Rita. Her eyes flashed angrily now. "I've seen you refuse to read books because Joe would drop you in a minute if he thought you were interested in the Church."

"That's a lie!" snapped Lynn. "I read what I want whether Joe or anyone else thinks I should or shouldn't!"

Rita held the edge of the table, fighting to control herself. "It is not a lie. You said yourself that you hadn't finished Father's last booklet because when Joe saw you reading it he took it away and destroyed it and I notice you still go with Joe and haven't bothered to read the book since."

She leaned toward her sister and asked pointedly. "Is that or isn't it accepting an Index? . . . And simply, because you accept Joe?"

Mrs. Sanders had risen and was glaring along the table at Rita and Lynn. "Listen, all of you girls. This has to stop! If you want to discuss religion with Father present, discuss it without tempers and personal arguments on the side."

Liberal's Ultimate Confusion

She turned and apologized. Her voice held resignation. "How well I know this routine from the early days of my marriage. Oh, the arguments my husband and I had and what a fool I was to permit him to raise my daughters as 'liberals.' As you said, Father, it is an excuse for a lack of philosophy, not a philosophy of life."

The mother spread her hands out toward her children. "Here it is . . . any old gods plus no dogma plus no church plus the morality you please . . . sum equals complete confusion."

I spoke softly as the two girls sat tensely trying to calm themselves. "Why don't we go inside and break off this discussion for awhile?" I mentioned the fact of my having to return to the rectory and prepare for the evening.

Seated in the living room, Lynn was the first to speak. "I'm sorry, Father. Rita was right about your booklet and this boy I'm dating."

"Forget the book. I'm happy if you saw that point."

"I saw it all too clearly in the heat of that moment," admitted the girl. She laughed cynically. "Funny, how true it seems. The Liberal too often is liberal only to his own advantage or desire. Joe had been setting up restrictions for me by his words and attitude and I was swimming along gaily accepting his way and yet fighting the Church on the same points."

Betty whistled softly and spoke to ease the tension. "I think that Joe is going to be in for a surprise one of these evenings."

Lynn laughed and agreed. "But first of all, I'm going to finish the booklet. I'll be a real liberal after this. . . ."

"Not too much, please," begged the mother. "I'm having just about enough to cope with in your present condition."

Rita walked over and sat beside Lynn on the sofa. She took her sister's hand and they talked softly for

a moment. Mrs. Sanders, Betty and I chatted about the work I was doing in this series of lectures.

Mrs. Sanders looked at the two girls chatting together. "I'm amazed that we have come to this point without worse hair-pulling. Father, I thought that the girls would keep you busy with a barrage of questions that would demand you cancel your lecture."

Rita looked up. "There are plenty of questions, Mother, but the big thing was getting that principle about the Church and her people believing as they do."

The Church Gives the Answers

"Once you get that," I said, "many of the questions can be figured out or, at least, accepted as part of the Catholic way of life."

"Well, I've sure learned that you just can't answer any old question about the Church that someone pops at you," said Rita. "If a person doesn't agree to grasping some of the background that Father has set up on God teaching us through the Church, then no question can be answered satisfactorily."

Betty looked at her sister and studied her face for a moment. "What did you mean when you said 'I've sure learned?' "

"You mean the English construction?"

"No, I don't mean the English construction," replied the oldest sister. "I mean just what did you imply by that expression?"

Rita fidgeted nervously and then blurted out her confession. "All this was to be a surprise for Mother, but I guess I can tell you all now. I've been taking

instructions. I'll enter the Church at Eastertime." The youngster walked to her mother and slipped her arm about her shoulder. "Father Downs, the priest who helped Mother is giving the lessons at our Newman Circle at school."

All discussion was forgotten as Lynn and Betty moved to Rita and the three clustered about their mother's chair. Mrs. Sanders smiled radiantly and kept patting the arm that Rita held around her. "This is a wonderful day, Father," the mother remarked. "Your visit and this news . . . I don't deserve it."

"Never mind deserving it or not deserving it," I told her. "Thank God for the blessing of Rita's great Grace."

Lynn smiled ruefully. "I can see myself soon winding up as a very small minority of one around here. Mother back in the Church, Rita in by Easter, Betty engaged to a Catholic . . . and, yet, I must be honest, I still question the Church."

"That's your privilege, Lynn," I said softly wishing before I left that I could "answer" her need for Faith.

I mentioned the fact of my intention to return to the rectory and stood up and walked toward Lynn.

"You may question the Church . . . but always bring the questions to her, remember that. In honest search and prayerfulness, not rancor. . . . Ask her, Lynn . . . not her enemies or her misinformed or uninformed critics. . . . Ask her, Lynn, . . . and, I promise . . . you will receive your true answer."

THE PAULIST FATHERS

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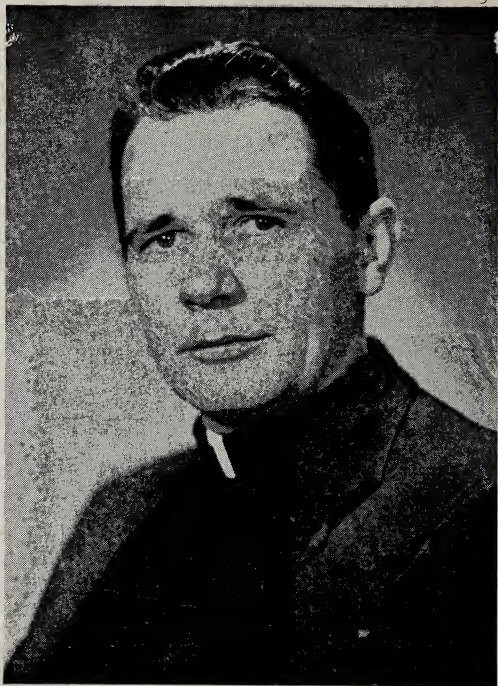
Nearly a hundred years ago, five American priests—all converts to the Catholic Church—frequently discussed the importance of explaining the Catholic Faith to the people of America. Isaac Thomas Hecker soon became their inspiring leader. He had read widely, engaged in advancing the cause of the workingman, and had consulted with leading Americans regarding a satisfying philosophy of life. Finding this in the Catholic Church, he dedicated his life to the assistance of those searching for eternal truth. In 1858, after presenting his plans to Pope Pius IX, he received permission to form—with his four associates—a society of priests who would labor to win converts and preserve the faith of our Catholic people.

First Superior and indefatigable leader, Father Hecker initiated the work that gradually blossomed into the Paulist apostolate. He gave lectures to non-Catholics, wrote books to enlighten them, founded *The Catholic World*, and published Catholic books, pamphlets and leaflets for widespread distribution.

Later on, his followers expanded these works. Parochial missions for the spiritual rejuvenation of Catholics, dear to the heart of Father Hecker, are now given in every part of the United States, in Canada, and in South Africa. Lectures to non-Catholics were systematized by Father Walter Elliott and still attract large numbers, especially in the form of Dialogues. Father Elliott, along with Father Alexander Doyle, organized courses in mission methods for priests, which are continued to this day. They also established *The Missionary* magazine which is now known as *Information*.

Changing times bring new needs and new opportunities to further the Paulist apostolate. Newman Clubs at State Universities; Trailer Chapels for the country districts; Information Centers in our large cities; THE PAULIST PRESS, perhaps the largest Catholic press in the country—these are works closely identified with the Paulists. *Techniques for Convert-Makers* assists priests and seminarians to participate in this work. And *The Paulist News* acquaints friends with the activities of the Society. Paulists are located in twenty-three parishes or mission centers laboring to fulfill the religious and spiritual ideals of Father Hecker.

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MEET THE AUTHOR

Father Finley of the Paulist Fathers received his B.A. from Seton Hall University and was ordained in 1947. He has served at St. Lawrence Church in Minneapolis, at the New York Paulist Information Center and is now on the New York Paulist Mission Band. The non-Catholic with a question to be answered will receive a prompt response if he addresses it to Father Finley, % The Paulist Press.