

ance there was general criticism of the matter treated and the manner of treating it.

To hear that there was general criticism of the catechism at the time of its appearance, of course, creates no surprise. Such criticism has never ceased at any time during the forty-six years which have intervened. There is some difficulty, however, in understanding the statement with which we are so long familiar "Prepared and enjoined by order of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore".

Apparently the "preparation" consisted in appointing a committee who turned the work over to one person. Did the Council in session, or even the committee, examine the draft in detail, criticize it carefully, suggest changes, insist upon corrections here and there, etc? Or did the compilation, the result of a week's attention on the part of one, eventually go to press as it came from his hands, without emendations? Of all this, nothing is known.

There is still greater difficulty accounting for the statement expressed by the word "enjoined". Naturally we have all been led to believe that Rome, without whose approbation a council's decrees have no binding effect, had formally prescribed the Baltimore Catechism as the official textbook to be used in the dioceses of the United States. Now, we are told, that Rome had nothing to do with it. By whom was the Baltimore Catechism "enjoined"? Has it been "enjoined" by any authority? Is not every diocese in the United States still free to adopt a catechism of its own choice?

Who was the author of that very familiar expression "prepared and enjoined by order of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore"? By what term should this expression be characterized? For forty-six years millions upon millions have read and believed it. A textbook whose purpose is to teach the Law of God can hardly afford to set aside the practice of that Law in designing its title-page. Is it not time to change that title-page?

Ordinarily, the production of a textbook covers a number of years. Ordinarily, it is the work of a teacher who with his regular classes year after year subjects every section of it to rigid tests. The textbook on Religion in use in our parish schools for the past forty-six years was produced in a week!

PRESBYTER SEPTUAGENARIUS.

ST. ROBERT BELLARMINI AND THE CATHOLIC PRESS.

To the Editor, THE ECCLESIASTICAL REVIEW.

The canonization of Robert Bellarmine does not seem to have created much comment or enthusiasm among American Catholics. Such a saint is not surrounded by the romance that circles about the North American Martyrs, nor does he possess the charm and attractiveness of St. Teresa of Lisieux; rather his life is bound up with the erudite studies of a theologian and the prosaic duties of a prelate. No one, however, who sees the hand of God in the actions of the Church can doubt that there is some significance in the canonization of such a man at the present time. If the saints have a lesson, surely Bellarmine has much to teach us.

One of the most difficult feats in mental gymnastics is to look at an historical personage in the proper perspective. We are prone to look at such men through glasses colored by our own environment. A superficial glance at Bellarmine would reveal an eminent theologian of post-Reformation days who was also a very holy man. There would not be much evidence of his influence on the present. So, linking his name to a few dusty tomes in an unfrequented theological library, we would complacently label the Cardinal "old-fashioned". This would be to miss the whole key to Bellarmine's character and sanctity. He is not a Saint to-day because he was old-fashioned; he is a Saint precisely because he was modern and up to date. He was a man who kept abreast of current thought, in fact he was often ahead of it, so far that even we can still afford to follow his lead. When we imagine Bellarmine in his study writing a refutation of James Stuart's theory of the divine right of kings; when we see his old-style lamp and antiquated writing material, we have a typical modern concept of a theologian of the past. Perhaps there is nothing wrong with the picture as we have painted it, but the rub comes when, by a peculiar mental kink, we think that the Cardinal *felt* the way he looks, that is, about three centuries behind time. This is not so. While Bellarmine was busy refuting King James he felt exactly like a twentieth-century ecclesiastic writing an article on the Soviet question. That old lamp looked to the Cardinal like a Mazda bulb does to us; he used a quill pen much as we use a fountain pen or a typewriter.

A little reflexion on things like these may convince us that to imitate the saints a person need not be behind the times, but, on the contrary, quite modern and energetic. Were Bellarmine living to-day, it is safe to say that he would be a steady contributor to our leading Catholic publications. He would probably have several attractive and solid volumes on sale as well as some interesting pamphlets on the newstands. All this sounds strange and a bit far-fetched, but is it very far from the truth? Cardinal Bellarmine was a staunch defender of the faith, so he chose the best methods for overcoming the opposition.

Our present-day problems have much in common with those which confronted Saint Robert. The same principles are at stake, although the application differs at times. Take for example the hubbub raised by the entrance of a Catholic in the presidential campaign. The whole controversy over religion and politics was set lose in the arena to stamp and bellow as it did in the days when James Stuart claimed to be an absolute monarch. That is only one instance among several. The Cardinal had to stem the tide of Protestantism which threatened to overwhelm the faith; the modern ecclesiastic has to take up arms against the ranks of atheism and infidelity. Holiness and learning were the weapons that the Saint used to such good effect; holiness and learning are the weapons that must be used to-day. These arms are the only means of success for one who wishes to follow in the footsteps of a doctor of the Church. Men such as Bellarmine should arise to-day, as in the past, from the ranks of the clergy. They will have to be men who realize that to follow this Saint's example they must be prayerful as well as learned, hard workers as well as deep thinkers.

Men in Bellarmine's class were characterized not only by the fact that they possessed something worth while, but also by their ability to pass their ideas on to the faithful. They were able to "sell" their goods. A man may be very learned and yet be unable to give to others the benefit of his learning, just as a saint may be holy and yet fail to attract people. Though such characters undoubtedly have their place in the economy of the Church, they never make a Bellarmine nor an Aquinas. The ecclesiastical writer who wishes to bind Catholics closer

to their faith, bring backsliders to a sense of their duty, and draw outsiders to the light of truth, must be able to present his arguments and persuasions in an attractive form. Such a task is a challenge even to a Bellarmine. During the Counter-Reformation the arch-enemy of the Church was the disintegrating effect of Protestantism. There existed, however, a more widespread interest in theological questions, together with a more general grasp of the principles of logic and argumentation, so that the number of those who could follow with profit a closely reasoned and often technical argument was larger than is the case to-day. Hence a work like Bellarmine's *Controversies* had a wide use and a popular appeal. The point to be noted is that the Cardinal fitted his plan of campaign to the mentality of the age, precisely what he would do, were he writing to-day. Against the Protestants he used what were then modern methods, which, *mutatis mutandis*, must be used to combat the modern mind. A syllogism that would have meant something to one of Bellarmine's contemporaries is unintelligible to the average man of this century. But that same argument, written out in plain language, would produce its effect. There would seem to be a need of interpreters of Catholic Philosophy and Theology, lest the people, bereft of the solid truths of faith, fall prey to half-baked theories and false religions.

There may be some who do not think that the Church should stoop to the methods of the crowd. It is doubtful if Bellarmine would be among this number. He did not disdain to enter the lists against all the Protestants of Europe, since he saw that some people have to be met on their own ground. The Catholic Church has shown her adaptability to changing conditions many a time, though in all the vicissitudes of her existence she retains her essential character. This is a power that springs from her innate vitality. As loyal sons we would like to see her powerful in our own time, her supremacy proven to all. The able defence and clear exposition of the faith by many lay writers is a source of great satisfaction, but a similar group among the clergy aids the Catholic cause. Let no one think that the labors of those ecclesiastics who are now fulfilling that need are underestimated. The point at issue is that the "laborers are few". Men thoroughly

grounded in Catholic teaching, imbued with a great love for the faith, and possessed with the power to place its truths before the people in an effective manner, would be an answer to the present need.

Some may think that by attractiveness of form is meant compromise of principle. Let them recall that there is such a thing as the attractiveness of the truth. The writers who will do the kind of work that Bellarmine did are not those who are captivated by the truth because of its literary effect, or pleased with Catholic doctrine because it lends itself to fine-writing; rather they are those animated by that love for the truth which finds delight in clothing it with a fitting garment of words.

The enemy makes his present attack under the standards of exotic religions, clever philosophies, and a fashionable atheism. Such erroneous systems attract by their outward glamor and the tincture of truth they contain. There seems to be a certain thrill for the Occidental mind in being a Theosophist or the member of a Hindu cult. To be a mere Catholic seems prosaic and dull. They fail to see that the Catholic comes into contact with more of the reality, wonder, and poetry of life than any other person. But the desire for apparent novelty persists. Thousands are employed in applying new theories to age-old principles and, in the event of a conflict, rejecting not the theory but the principle. When some venture to maintain that the principle should be retained, the high seriousness with which they make the assertion proves it to be something out of the ordinary. This is the problem which Catholics have to solve.

One often hears of the treasures of Catholic thought. To many this phrase conjures up a row of dusty tomes with Latin titles on their frayed covers. Such a sight is quite repulsive to the modern mind, which delights in bright-colored blurb jackets covering neat volumes with the ink scarcely dry on their pages. Too frequently the Catholic theologian keeps the same old display in his cobwebby windows, then wonders why the crowd goes across the street to the new-comer, who, though he sells an inferior article, has taken the latest course in window display and salesmanship. Can the members of the clergy say that they bring Catholic truth before the people

with the same energy that their opponents employ in spreading error? The apostle is not the only fisher of men; the devil is also in that business and seems to be quite adept in the preparation of bait.

But is not charity better than authorship? Is not a cup of cold water given for Christ better than a learned book written about Him? What enlightenment does St. Robert give us on this point? His reputation for charity equals his reputation for learning; he is a Saint not because of his charity alone, nor yet for his learning. He was given the honors of the altar because he found time for both. While letting his "light shine before men," he reached out his hand to help the little ones of the Master. It is in the twentieth century, in the year 1931 that the Church proposes Robert Bellarmine as a model for the imitation of the clergy. In him we have an effective defender of the faith, a learned theologian, an excellent religious, a charitable priest, and a zealous prelate, and—a Saint.

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**A NEW DECLARATION REGARDING THE "GRAVE
INCOMMODUM" IN CANON 1098.**

From the words of canon 1098, "sine gravi incommodo", some authors have drawn the conclusion that only in cases of physical absence of the pastor, the Ordinary or other properly delegated priest, could Catholics benefit by the concession made in that canon—that is, to marry before two witnesses without the presence of a duly authorized priest, provided of course the other conditions of the canon were verified. Other canonists, however, had insisted that the words "sine gravi incommodo" permit of a wider interpretation and that the favor of the canon could be extended to cases where the pastor, the Ordinary or delegated priest was indeed physically present, but morally hindered from assisting at the marriage. The classic case they used to illustrate their point was this: in certain countries of Europe a civil marriage ceremony is not only prescribed, but it may not be preceded by any religious marriage ceremony under threat of penalties. Canonists of the second group just mentioned maintained that, if for serious