

THE SOLIDARITY OF SALVATION

CATHOLICISM, like Jewry, is persecuted because of its solidarity. But we are not forgetful for want of reminders that there is a Catholicism accurately distinguished by inverted commas: a heresy as subtle as that of the Pharisees: a 'faith' impotent to find expression in action. It is the faith of multitudes, but more especially of the elect. I would explain: it is the faith that has been called super-Catholicism.

Super. For it is courageous in condemnation (where the weaker brethren, through foolish sympathy or fear of inhumanity, fail), it is admired, rather than considered inordinate, for its craving for Test. Its width is infinite; dare I say, its depth negligible? It deploras 'materialism'; its affirmation of trust in the Providence of God and indemnification hereafter renders suspect, almost, any suggestion of the obligations of justice here below. Yet, in its 'simplicity,' it inspires prayer for much more than Daily Bread, the sufficiency for which our Lord taught us to ask: and a host of additional delicacies is said to be the reward of this 'childish faith.' A Heavenly intimacy reduces the Saints to the level of contractors; familiarity does not, however, breed contempt.

It has a frugal trend. It is less costly to lavish devotion upon an idealised Christ than upon the Saviour, who (dying for *mankind*) promised thereafter to disguise himself as suffering humanity.

Now it is Super-Catholicism, and not Catholicism, that has no answer to the charge of individualism brought by communists and others against the Church of God. *Would they (my super-Catholics) be as surprised as Communists to learn that the doctrinal conception of the Sacred Heart presents human society with a theory of true Communism?*

The comprehensive humanity of Our Lord expressed by the Sacred Heart postulates of mankind a unity. And even as mankind was mystically united in Adam, our first Parent, so it is an organic whole that dwells in Christ even as Christ is present in the indivisible unity of man. Origi-

nal sin involves a *social* guilt, and it is a *social* regeneration (the salvation wrought by Jesus Christ) that is effected by the Catholic Church. Christ's virtue has laid hold of the whole bulk of fallen humanity. No less.

In the Sacred Heart, then, there is a valid humanitarianism: mankind in Christ, the comprehensive Man, the Human Image in which every man may find his own manhood *and the humanity of every one of his neighbours*. For humanity, with Christ as its Head, has a history of strict continuity, and it is within this continuity (and not independent of it) that each individual contributes a nearer part. Humanity lives one life. Humanity dies one death. 'In Adam all die.' But, 'even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' Except for the Heart of Jesus Christ pulsating in humanity, humanity's death were veritable death.

In an article in *Christendom* (March, 1936) M. Motchoulsky expounded the significance of the Orthodox *Sobornost*, the christocentric conception of human history, the unity of mankind in Christ as well as the power of Christ acting through human freedom. There is little peculiarly Orthodox about this line of thought. It is Pauline and Catholic. But we could well afford to impress its implication upon ourselves of the Western Church.

In the Sacred Heart there is no 'escape' for the individualist and little justification for those who discover themselves and only themselves in their devotions. The 'Christ' of these people is but a mirror for their own emotions, ever siding with them in their contentions, ever ready with patent comfort. God (my irreverence is small beside the sacrilege of the fact itself) is reduced to the level of a pet, a puppet taken to bed by a child. The Divine Saviour becomes a fiction of the imagination, a blasphemous counterfeit, a mere cult to absorb superfluous affection and repay its devotees with sweetness. It is of the same order as the Jehovah of certain political leaders who is always on the right side.

Heaven forbid that I should have the impertinence to disparage the warmth of devotion which is the frequent accompaniment of our Faith, that I should belittle in any degree those truly human manifestations of feeling that are

peculiar to the external shewing forth of our religion, that a single soul should be robbed of the sensible reward of its faith. (Heaven knows the value of such consolation to a soul overburdened by the complexity of life.) But the fact remains that our faith concerns us first and foremost with the responsibility of action, that our religion is primarily a membership with the liabilities of membership, that God, too, may gauge our love of Him by our love of our neighbour.

To revert to my Super-Catholics: forced to define, such Catholics as these would presumably admit that there is no way of salvation *effected personally* by each in his own way and by his own virtue. They might be less ready to grant that the Catholic Church, the universal means of regeneration, is no less than a pan-human Commune. For there are many (adepts in pseudo-mysticism) who fancy God to be transcendent almost in contempt of creation and humanity. Absorbed in God, lo! they have gained the whole world. But have they? Or have they accomplished a break with the world which is merely a break with humanity. This, to return to a former animadversion, is the background of that comfortable 'Catholicism' which preaches indemnity hereafter as a good business principle here below. Such people, Professor Motchoulsky reminded us, are not at all like the monk in the legend who abandoned his brethren, and who in the solitude of the desert attempted to discard his humanity and in pure spirit rise to the vision of God; for when at length he was granted a glimpse of God's face, it was the God-man Christ he saw, and in Him the brethren that he had deserted; and so he was forced back to them to love and serve them.

In Christ, indeed, we are men made free; but with such a freedom that we can rise only to be caught up in the resurrection of Our Lord, to be sustained by 'the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.' Indeed, we are born again—into a corporate unity, into the New Humanity of God the Son.

J. F. T. PRINCE.