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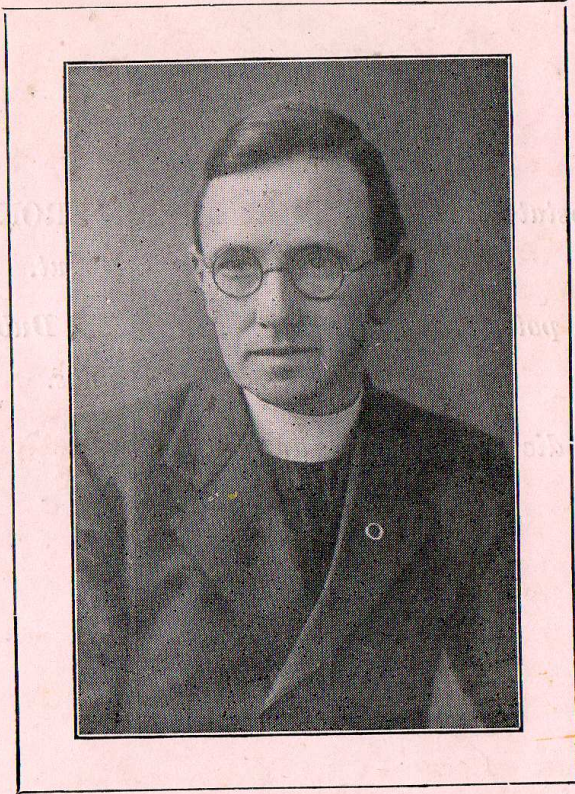
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DUBLIN

# A CATHOLIC NATION AND A CATHOLIC PRESS

By REV. JOSEPH DEERY, M.A.



1928.

bairé áta eilac:  
DUBLIN:

comlucc na fírinne caitlice i néirinn,  
CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY OF IRELAND,  
7 7 8 Sráid na Mainistreaché Íochair.  
7 & 8 LOWER ABBEY STREET.



*Nihil obstat:* MICHAEL CANONICUS CRONIN, S.T.D.

*Censor Theol. Deput.*

*Imprimi potest:* ✠ EDUARDUS, Archiep. Dublinen,

*Hiberniae Primas.*

*Dublino, die 12<sup>o</sup> Octobris, anno 1928.*

## A CATHOLIC NATION AND A CATHOLIC PRESS.

By REV. J. DEERY, M.A.

A NATION can hardly be said to deserve to be reckoned as genuinely a Catholic nation merely on the ground that a majority of its citizens profess the Catholic faith. To possess a right to the title, the professing majority should be a practising majority; practising Catholics should bulk largest in the nation's roll. For a full vindication of the right, that majority should furthermore have sufficient influence on national thought to ensure that public opinion is predominantly Catholic—Catholic in tone, in outlook. This implies that questions bearing on public morality will be viewed from the stand-point of the Catholic moral code. In some instances this will not present much difficulty, as Catholic opinion will already have been formed. But, then, new theories are constantly being canvassed. In a Catholic nation these must be subjected to examination in the light of the Church's teaching, and leaders of Catholic thought in the countries will find themselves confronted with the continual task of forming and cultivating a body of truly Catholic opinion on all current topics which have a moral bearing.

For the accomplishment of this task, the best and most effective means at their disposal is the Catholic Press. It is not the only means; there are others which are effective, too, but the Press is of primary importance and ranks first in effectiveness.

In different periods of the Church's history, different apostolates were necessary to counter the evils of the time.

The apostolate of our age is the Catholic Press. Lest you should think that there is even slight exaggeration in this statement, I have set down here the words of four successive Sovereign Pontiffs. Their views, no doubt, are merely personal—but in each case they are the considered opinions of the highest moral authority on earth, given from out all the experience and enlightenment of the Vicar of Christ.

From among the many declarations of Leo XIII., who realised many years ago that the success of his efforts for social reform depended on the support of the Press, I select the following: In a letter to the Bishop of Vienna, 1883, he wrote: "Among the means best adopted to the defence of religion there is none more efficacious and more suited to the present time than meeting the Press with the Press." Sixteen years later he wrote to the Bishops of Brazil: "We renew our advice that you should labour with as much zeal as prudence for the publication and diffusion of Catholic newspapers." His dictum that "a Catholic newspaper in a parish is a perpetual mission" has become a rallying cry of the Catholic press.

Pius X. differed widely from his predecessor in many ways, but his attitude to the Press was not one of them. Here are his words: "Neither the faithful nor the clergy make use of the Press as they should. Sometimes people say that the Press is an innovation, and that souls used to be saved without newspapers in former times. They do not bear in mind that in former times the poison of the bad Press was not spread everywhere, and that therefore the antidote was not so necessary. In vain will you build churches, give missions, found schools—all your works will be destroyed, all your efforts fruitless, if you are not able to wield the defensive and offensive weapon of a loyal and sincere Catholic press." On one occasion, receiving a Catholic journalist in audience, he said of his work: "There is no nobler mission in the world to-day. My predecessors blessed the swords and armour of Christian warriors: I am happy to bless the pen of a Christian journalist."

The Holy Father did not hesitate to call the work of the Catholic press a "mission"—an apostolate. After these words we can readily give credence to the reports that he would willingly sell his Episcopal Ring and Cross to support a Catholic paper, that he reckoned as his greatest achievement the establishment of a weekly paper in his Diocese.

To him succeeded Benedict XV., who declared: "It seems to Us that nothing is more desirable than that Catholic papers and Catholic literature should have a large circulation, so that everyone may have every day good reading which instructs and warns, and strengthens and promotes the Christian virtues."

Our present Holy Father may be said to have surpassed all his predecessors in action. From the inauguration of his pontificate his great concern, his absorbing passion, has been for the missions, and he has always recognised that in the Press lay his most effective means of propaganda. Hence came early exhortations to make wide use of the Press for reports of the activities of his own Work of the Propagation of the Faith, hence came the establishment two years ago of the Fides Service, to supply the Catholic Press of the world with news of missionary activity, missionary difficulties, missionary needs. Further, Pius XI. has declared: "The power and influence of the Catholic Press are so great that even the apparently most insignificant activity in favour of the good Press is always of great importance, because great results may come therefrom. Anything you do for the good Press, I shall consider as having been done for me personally. The Catholic Press is very close to my heart and I expect much, very much from it."

The Popes have given the lead. The Bishops have followed it. Archbishop Ireland said that:

"The Catholic who is not a reader of a Catholic journal is without zeal for the growth of Catholic faith in his own mind and heart, without zeal in providing himself with arms to defend before the world his Catholic belief;

the Catholic parent who does not put into the hands of his child a Catholic paper is sadly neglectful of his obligation to use every means to educate his child into the fulness of Catholic life and spirit."

Our own bishops have long realised the importance of the press. In 1915, they stated :

"The unholy zeal of those who are trying to undermine faith and morality should be at once a warning and a stimulus to us to make the best use we can of the great power of the Catholic Press for the protection and improvement of our devoted people."

And in June of this year the joint pronouncement was issued from the meeting at Maynooth :

"The Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland, impressed with the necessity of the widespread circulation of Catholic publications, but particularly of publications catering for popular needs, urge upon the faithful to support Catholic magazines, periodicals, and newspapers by taking one or more of them into their homes weekly. The regular reading of these Catholic publications cannot but have a wholesome effect on family life, and eventually on the life of the entire nation."

To appreciate fully the reasons which inspired these striking declarations, it is necessary to consider the nature of the modern Press. The phrase is almost a tautology, for the Press is a modern growth. The earliest periodicals date from the close of the fifteenth century, and it is significant that the Church quickly realised the possibilities of the new field. It is significant, too, that even in its infancy, though in Catholic nations the Press for the most part reflected Catholic thought, scandals were advertised to such an extent that Gregory XIII. was compelled to excommunicate journalists who gave publicity to these unsavoury affairs.

However, the full potentialities for propaganda of the new weapon were not appreciated or employed until after the French Revolution. Then it was non-Catholics—I may

say anti-Catholics—who were the first in the field. Soon came a general freedom of the press, a freedom which often degenerated into licence—the evolution is normally rapid when effective control, such as religion can impose, is lacking.

The development of the Press in our age has been astonishing. It has become the great power of the day—the most effective means of propaganda, the mainspring of every movement. Every tendency in a nation's life, be it intellectual or political, spiritual or material, tries to win the support of the masses through the Press, it seeks to make the Press its platform—seeks in fact to have a mouthpiece of its own among the Press. The power of the Press has grown, and its influence for good or evil has increased.

In recent years, the scheme of the general Press has undergone alteration—from a magazine it has become almost universally a news-record. At first glance, one would think that the change could be only of advantage from the religious standpoint, for a magazine presents opportunities for irreligious propaganda which the newspaper does not seem to provide; such is not the case. The open enemy is less dangerous than the hidden foe. Where a magazine is openly anti-Catholic, it causes less harm, and support for the Catholic press is more easily obtainable. The so-called neutral Press is the real danger to Catholic life. To appreciate why, we must dwell briefly on the present content. That is chiefly news. Now for a definition of what constitutes news, I am obliged to a prominent English journalist who stated some months ago that a celebrated musician's appearance at the Albert Hall to give a classical recital would not be news, but his going to the same Hall to cut his throat would be news. There is the evil. The normal, the healthy, is not news, is hardly worthy of the columns of the Press; the bizarre, the abnormal, the unsavoury is to be the chief mental pabulum of the newspaper reading public—and persistent campaigns of advertisement and inducement have now made "newspaper readers" a synonym for mankind.

This perverted news sense is not wholly the fault of



journalists—a morbidly minded section of the public must shoulder its share of the blame, but it is a real menace to the Catholic mind. It is sometimes pleaded that publication of ugly affairs acts as a deterrent on potential offenders. Even were it a deterrent, which I doubt, the old axiom is still there—the end does not justify the means. And a magistrate complained lately that this publicity actually hindered the conviction of the guilty.

There are papers which are apparently published specially to cater for morbidity—they are despicable, but if the Censorship Bill effects what we expect from it, they will not in the future be our greatest danger. Good Catholics will not read them, but how many good Catholics will make their more “decent” fellows their mental food supply, and these good Catholics are all the more exposed to danger because they do not see it, and sometimes are unwilling to be convinced that it exists.

An economic observer told me recently that great harm—irreparable, he said—had been done in Ireland because people had been led to accept an abnormal economic situation as normal. There is a similar danger—but immeasurably greater in its evil consequences—to be feared from the continual reading of the abnormal.

There is another danger. Mr. Blythe declared some time ago that he considered the constant reading of cross-Channel papers harmful to the national outlook of Irish people. Yet I do not think that these papers, at least in the editions for Irish consumption, indulge in anti-Irish propaganda. How much greater must be the danger to the spiritual outlook of a people from the reading of a non-Catholic press. There may be no definite anti-Catholic bias showing, but neither is there anything of the universal life of the Church, of her varied spheres of activity, of her struggles to realise justice and peace among all, of her constant glorious manifestations of faith, of her answers to her calumniators. The atmosphere is frankly materialistic—the mind of the reader is cut off from his fellow-believers throughout the world, he loses his insight into the glory, the holiness of the Church of Christ, and

insensibly his reading blunts the Catholicity of his mind, dulls the keenness of the spiritual outlook, and takes the edge off that fineness of soul which he should regard as a precious heritage, because it springs directly from the possession of the true faith.

Again, though people have not become more studious, they have become more curious. They want to know all about the topics of the day, they want to be able to talk about them to others. Where are they going to get their views? Where, but from the pulpit or the press—and for one who gets them from the pulpit, there will be many who will appropriate the opinions of their daily papers. They may not do it consciously, but they will do it none the less certainly, for a man's reading must have its reflex in his outlook. Many of the questions will have moral bearings, and the Catholic reader of the non-Catholic press will find himself the possessor of a non-Catholic outlook, and in these matters non-Catholics very often indeed means anti-Catholic, means morally unsound.

So far I have classed the non-Catholic press which is not definitively anti-Catholic or immoral as “neutral”—but I have done it more than justice. Widespread ignorance of Catholic practice and teaching, coupled, perhaps, with some bias which defies concealment, prevents it from giving a correct presentation of things Catholic. A quarter of a century ago Mr. Britten published a pamphlet on the subject of misrepresentation—and the pamphlet was re-issued in 1922 as being still applicable. We have had recently exaggerated and false statements as to the Pope's state of health, so many rumours of the resignation of Cardinal Gasparri that he has ceased from refuting them. We have had the boycott of news of the Mexican persecution—a conspiracy of silence which even included the boycott in the United States press of George Bernard Shaw's letter on the subject of an impartial inquiry. Look at the contrast in the amount of publicity given to Miss Earhart, when she flew the Atlantic, and Major del Prete, who died a tragic but intensely Catholic death after having accomplished a far greater flight from Europe to Brazil. When Monsignor Koroshets was, in August, appointed Premier of

Jugo Slavia, mention of his priesthood was frequently forgotten. And we had the *Daily Express* flinging broadcast the blasphemies of Emil Ludwig. A book was published in England some time ago—and subsequently withdrawn because of its offensiveness. Yet it was welcomed by even the highest toned and most “decent” organs of the English press. Here is the record of the International Catholic Truth Society, which devotes one side of its activity in the United States to refuting misrepresentation and calumny directed against the Church :

1900—96 letters of refutation published in the secular press.

1903—304     “            “            “

1905—226     “            “            “

and coming nearer to the present—

from 1913-17—946 letters of refutation published in the secular press and magazines ;

from 1917-23—958           “            “

The Society states that the representative newspapers are willing to right the wrong they have done—but “righting” is hardly in their power—a lie with a good start is very difficult to overtake.

In some of the cases, the bias stands revealed—and it must be borne in mind that facts alone may be used to convey a wrong impression—but even where there is no conscious bias, lack of interest, as of information about Catholic affairs, renders the non-Catholic press unworthy to rank even as harmless, as neutral, for it does not provide the constant contact with the Church which is essential to keep alive the Catholic spirit amid the distracting calls of the world.

I think I have said enough to show that the non-Catholic press is an obstacle to the preserving and keeping safe and pure and strong the spirit of religion and of morality. The nation whose mental food is that press cannot hope to have a strong body of Catholic opinion dominating and controlling the conduct of its affairs—it cannot hope even for a

maintenance of such strength as there is, it cannot hope to hold whatever measure of influence Catholic opinion actually exercises.

“The most religious and submissive to authority,” said Cardinal Pie, “will, if they read bad newspapers, become in thirty years a nation of unbelievers and rebels. Humanly speaking, no preaching can hold its own against a corrupt Press.”

The truth of these words is well borne out in the history of France—France which once gloried in the title of “The Eldest Daughter of the Church,” but which did not adopt the means to stem the swelling tide of anti-Catholic propaganda, which saw many of its Catholics gradually slipping away from the Faith, in which finally the Catholic majority found itself without an effective voice in national affairs, and in which the religion of the majority was practically outlawed by the minority whose utilisation of the Press had placed power in their hands. The danger was realised from the beginning by some Catholics, who tried to counteract it in the only way in which it could be countered. *L'Univers* was established—Louis Veuillot and Montalembert soon rallied to it and worked hard for it but the people slept at the foot of the volcano.

In 1848 Freemasons rallied to the call of Cremieux. This man, like so many of his successors a Jew, announced his “Plan of Campaign” thus: “Regard all else as nothing—regard money as nothing, public opinion as nothing. Seize the Press, and you will have all the rest.” The plan was enthusiastically adopted, thousands of papers and periodicals graded to suit the capacities of all sections of the population, were established. Soon the greater portion of the Press in France was in their control. Nor did they rest there—they established organisations for circulating their papers and ensuring their admission into all popular libraries and reading-rooms. A Catholic Press there was, too, but it was not united, it was not supported—the danger was not appreciated. The propaganda against the Church was often, in the words of a French Catholic publicist, “monstrous, but it was presented with such

coolness and persistency that it was finally accepted as true." Catholic leaders there were who foretold the inevitable outcome, but they cried in a wilderness and their words went unheeded. Amongst these was M. Baudon, the President General of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, who wrote in 1875 to the Catholic Committee:—

"In my opinion the serious importance of the Press has not been sufficiently understood by Catholics. They dream of building churches, of forming communities, of multiplying asylums for orphans and for the poor—works which are certainly most necessary—but they forget that besides all these needs there is another, *which takes precedence of all the rest*: I mean the extension of the Catholic Press. For if the Catholic Press is not supported and encouraged and elevated to the position which it ought to occupy, the churches will be deserted if they are not burnt, the communities will be expelled the more they are established, and the charitable institutions and the schools themselves will be taken away from the religion which has founded them. Short of a miracle, the efforts of Catholics will be useless as long as the Press is in the hands of their enemies."

The awakening came, but it came only when many souls had been lost to the Church—some became merely indifferent, others bitter antagonists—and though much has been done since to recover lost ground, it will take generations to overcome the evil caused by a half-century's neglect of the press.

From Austria, too, a country that took pride in its Catholicity, there is a lesson to be learned. At the beginning of this century the country was dominated by an anti-Catholic press, which conducted a systematic campaign against the Church and religion. The result was that about a thousand Catholics became formal apostates in the one city of Vienna ever year. But, it may be urged, there is no such danger threatening Ireland. Well, Ireland is not more Catholic than was France, and if an open foe could do such harm in France and Austria, who shall measure the power for evil of one which is hidden. The constant stream of non-Catholic literature which floods our country really



is a danger, and the only question for us in Ireland is this—shall we imitate France and Austria in their mistake, or shall we adopt in time the means by which they sought to make recovery?

When fever is spreading its infection, we arm ourselves against its assault with prophylactics. The non-Catholic press is the fever of the Catholic outlook, the Catholic mind. We must have our preventative at hand—and the best preventative is the Catholic Press. Nothing can do the work so effectively. Sermons, Catholic action—these will help. But the preacher can speak only to those who come to hear him—the press will appeal to a far larger audience: for one who takes part in Catholic action, a thousand will read. Father Hordt, addressing the general conference of German Catholics held in Madgeburg last month, said in this regard: "The question of the Press is a question of the existence of our Catholicism, is a matter of conscience for every Catholic. Without a religious Press, Catholic action must dry up." A Catholic Press keeps the nation in touch with the life and activities of the Church, at home and abroad—makes it sorrow with the suffering brethren, rejoice in the fresh triumphs that are being constantly won, keeps it informed of what the Church is doing for the amelioration of the lot of man, defends the Church against attack, it even gains converts for her. It provides an antidote against bad reading, forms sound opinion, strengthens faith, and prevents the corrosion of materialism from destroying the soul. The Press is the enemy's weapon of offensive, it must be ours for defensive and counter-attack. Where the Catholic Press is strong, Catholic opinion is strong—where it is weak, that opinion has small influence.

Now there is no doubt that Ireland is a Catholic nation—but unfortunately her position in the world of the Catholic Press is far below what it should be. Some Protestant bodies are constantly distributing literature in our midst—they are using the Press: the Christian scientists have had a stall in the Ballsbridge Shows to disseminate their publications. But Catholics lag behind.

To show how we stand relatively, I shall outline the

position of the Catholic Press in some other countries where Catholics form at least a fair proportion of the total population.

I shall take France first. Neglect of the Press cost it dearly; attention to the Press has brought about a remarkable recovery.

The beginning of the revival dates from the foundation of the "Maison de la Bonne Presse" by the Assumptionist Fathers. In 1883, this house produced a daily, *La Croix*, which now ranks fourth in circulation among the Paris dailies, and has more direct subscribers than any paper in France. That position it has attained only by downright hard work and intensive national organisation. Once the initial mistake was realised, Catholics took good care that it would not be repeated. They recognised that establishing papers was not enough—that they must be read. They anticipated the words of Pius X: "To publish Catholic journals and place them in the hands of honest men is not enough. It is necessary to spread them as far as possible that they may be read by all and especially by those whom Christian charity demands we should tear away from the poisonous sources of evil literature."

The laity rallied around the priests, and organisations to push sales were founded, beginning with Armentières, where 1,500 subscribers were secured in six months. The formation of parochial committees spread—the members working on Sunday for the Catholic papers, selling them at the churches, visiting houses and urging the taking of a Catholic paper. Incidentally they shouted down the vendors of anti-Catholic papers. They also saw to it that the papers were passed on when read. All this entailed trouble—keeping registers, sending reminders, etc.; but they found the results amply repaid the trouble. The ladies joined in, too. To help these *Chevaliers* and *Pages*, they banded themselves, many of them of the highest social rank, into the "Sisters of St. Jeanne d'Arc." Their first care was for their own homes—their next, to go out and sell the Catholic papers, to introduce them into public libraries and reading-rooms, cafes and barbers' shops,

anywhere readers might be found. Later, the "Presse pour tous" was organised to enable the poor to keep in touch with Catholic affairs. The society collects subscriptions for distributing papers to circles and shops where the poor can read them. The "Ave Maria" League was founded in 1897, by Admiral des Touches, its objects being to make reparation for the bad effects of the anti-Catholic Press, and to pray for God's blessing on the movement for the diffusion of the good press. This century has seen fresh developments. The "Agence de la Presse Nouvelle" was founded in 1905, to supply the press with up-to-date Catholic news stories, and in three years this agency had 100 papers on its list. In 1908, three and a half million francs were subscribed to keep the "Maison de la Bonne Presse" free from Government influence and place it on a sound financial basis. Much the same was done for *L'Univers*, while a congress held at Rheims about the same time recommended that charitable institutions should pay at least 10 per cent. of their receipts to the Press committee. The result is that France has now over 400 Catholic papers—Paris alone has three Catholic dailies—and the "Maison de la Bonne Presse" publishes alone almost thirty papers of various kinds, for whose production it employs a staff of 600 hands.

#### AUSTRIA

When the Catholic press was at its lowest ebb in Austria, the Pius-Verein was established in 1906. This association, which received a special brief of encouragement from Pius X., propounded a plan on these lines—that the Catholic Press should cease its bickerings, that Catholics should support it, such as it was; that sales should be promoted by local committees, and that funds should be collected and given to the Press to enable it to carry out improvements. The result was amazing. An energetic campaign roused Catholics from their torpidity and united them. In less than three years the Verein had 100,000 members, the status and the circulation of Catholic papers had advanced enormously. The Verein enabled journalists to be properly



trained, and it founded an agency for supplying news. Soon the best writers in Austria became attracted, and the Catholic press grew to be a powerful force in the nation's life. The disruption of the old Austrian Empire after the Great War caused a temporary set-back, but the organisation had been established so solidly that the difficulties created were overcome. To-day the Pius-Verein has 150,000 members in Austria proper, and the reading matter of the Catholics is supplied by over 100 newspapers.

#### GERMANY.

In Germany, too, the Press was neglected until the Kulturkampf aroused Catholic feeling. Opposition generally helps religion, and to this ramp are due the realisation of the importance of the press, and the formation of the Catholic Centre Party. But the movement progressed slowly until the organisation of the Augustinus-Verein, which has just celebrated the Golden Jubilee of its foundation in Dusseldorf. Its objects were to assist the establishment of Catholic papers, to supply them with news, to train journalists, to help the needy members of the profession to secure co-operation and harmony in policy between the publishers.

The circulation of the Catholic Press has increased a hundred-fold in that half-century. The growth has been effected by the efforts of the whole Catholic body, on which it has in its turn re-acted. Catholic life has revived, Catholic institutions have prospered, Catholic principles have been respected, and Catholic rights defended. The work of the Press has been included among the activities of many associations—its condition is reviewed at yearly congresses and methods for improvement and extension discussed. To-day the outlook is brighter than ever. Germany possesses 600 Catholic newspapers, almost 300 of which are dailies, and 60 of these have circulations of between 50,000 and 400,000. And not only is the quantity satisfactory; the quality, too, is excellent.

#### HOLLAND.

This last remark is true also of Holland, whose Catholic press does credit alike to the nation and the Church. This little land has over 30 Catholic dailies, and more than 100 papers which are at least weekly. Three of its dailies—*De Maasbode*, *De Tijd* and *Het Centrum*—rank with the country's best.

The Catholic press examines every question from the Catholic standpoint, and suggests the Catholic solution to every problem. The result is evident in the zeal and keenness of Dutch Catholics, and in the influence and prestige they own in a Protestant land.

#### BELGIUM.

In Belgium, Catholics turned to the work of the press to loosen the growing grip of Freemasonry and irreligion. A society—The Work of St. Paul—was established, and now half the Belgian press is Catholic. Every important town has its Catholic daily; of these, the *Patriote* has a daily circulation of 180,000; the *Antwerp Gazette* over 70,000.

In other countries it is almost the same. Bavaria has its Catholic press and its Catholic Press Club. In Italy, especially Northern Italy, every town of importance has its Catholic daily, and the work of the Press is helped by the Society of St. Paul. Spain has undergone a revival, with its 48 Catholic dailies, its Catholic news-agency, and its "Apostolate of the Press" of almost 100,000 members. Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Croatia, Switzerland—all have a representative Catholic Press, issuing dailies, weeklies and monthlies. Switzerland has made the mistake of neglecting the Press, and suffered the inevitable penalty—but it has taken steps against a second mistake.

So much has already been done in Europe, and more will be done. At the Cologne Press Exhibition this summer, a committee of Catholic journalists, representing seven countries, was appointed to lay the foundations of an International Catholic News Agency. This demarché marks an epoch in the history of the Catholic Press—it will help the apostolate, and will promote peace among the nations.

But Catholic press activity is not confined to Europe. Australia has found the need of a Catholic press, and supports it. So with India, which has a Catholic daily and 21 weeklies. So with the infant missionary church of Africa. And America claims special attention.

As far back as 1884, the Plenary Synod of Baltimore recommended that bad literature should be opposed by a Catholic press, but the growth in circulation, influence and quality of the press in the United States is due chiefly to the organisation, by the American Hierarchy in 1919, of the National Catholic Welfare Council, generally known by its initials as the N.C.W.C. Amongst other departments, one for the press was established, under the control of a journalist of mark, Mr. Justin McGrath. From that time the Catholic Press has forged ahead, and its roll in the United States now is : 8 dailies, in five different languages ; with a circulation of over 100,000. Over 100 weeklies ; more than 70 in English, with a circulation of over one and a half millions. Over 30 in ten other languages, with a circulation of over 400,000. One Polish weekly has a circulation of 60,000, a German of 40,000. Further the N.C.W.C. service has been adopted for teaching in many Catholic schools.

And now, what of Ireland ? The history of the Catholic Press movement here is melancholy reading. We had a Catholic penny magazine—it lasted a year. We had the *Tablet* for six years. For forty years, until *The Standard* was founded this year, we have had only one weekly—the *Irish Catholic*. We have no Catholic daily, no Catholic news-agency, no Catholic Press Society. Now Ireland is in a better position than most countries, in that the Press is almost entirely controlled by Catholics. But, though it pains me to have to say it, the ordinary daily and weekly press of Ireland is not a Catholic press.

In the first place, our papers must rely for much of their news on non-Catholic agencies and correspondents—often the kind which refer to the Sydney Congress as the “ public elevation of the Host,” or tell us that 30,000 children celebrated Holy Communion, or declare that the British

Legion visit to the battlefields this year was the “ greatest pilgrimage in history ” ; and as if that were not enough, some of them are constantly quoting from the non-Catholic press, as if to emphasise their dependence and proclaim their inferiority. These items are published without comment, as a rule, and perhaps it is just as well so.

Last year, during the Anglican discussion on the “ Real Presence,” an English priest stated, while preaching from the predella of the altar, that he was at that moment standing within a few yards of Jesus of Nazareth. A leading Irish paper published the statement with the sub-title : “ Priest’s Alleged View ” ! Only in the Catholic Press will Catholic views be adequately presented. I do not blame the ordinary press—it lacks, from the very nature of the case, the special training which is requisite.

In the second place, some papers have departed from the traditional spirit of Irish journalism, and attempt to pander to sensationalism—a murder is always “ featured,” a breach of promise case is good “ copy,” letters on unsavoury topics are published. Much of the matter printed is frivolous at the best—in this connection sport occupies too large a space—and too much of this frivolous reading enervates the moral sense, destroys the most serious qualities of the mind.

For this, undoubtedly, a section of the public must share the blame—it has allowed its taste to become vitiated. And occasionally we meet such as this (from a weekly paper) : “ The tenement class married couple who boast of ten, twelve and fifteen children should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves for bringing so much misery into the world ” ; “ this is a question that demands the urgent attention of all social agencies in this country . . . it will have to be resolutely faced before social progress can be made.” Plays and films, too, are criticised in the generality from a merely pagan standpoint.

The local press caters chiefly for local interest, and I fear that in many cases this rises no higher than the doings in the local District Court. I am not blaming the local press for that. To do them justice, these papers are generally willing to publish items of local Catholic news, but I know that when I controlled the distribution in Ireland of the *Fides*



Service, giving news of the missionary church, some local papers did not use it. Sometimes, too, some of them stray from the narrow path and give prominence to scandalous matter.

There is also the additional fact that many Irish people obtain their supply of daily and weekly reading from across the Channel. More papers are being read in Ireland than ever before, but the bulk of the reading not only does not help the Catholic spirit, but serves to make it atrophied. The remedy is the Catholic Press—yet that remedy is not being used in anything resembling its proper measure. I know that the faith is still strong in the hearts of most Irishmen and women—but it must be kept strong. The history of France should ever be a warning to us, to remind us that if we neglect the Catholic Press, we neglect the simplest and most obvious means of keeping religion in a flourishing condition. Our support of the Catholic Press is lamentably weak, yet everything depends upon it.

For Ireland to assume her proper place as a Catholic nation in this regard, two things are necessary—the education of popular taste, and organisation in aid of the Catholic Press. Really these two things are one—people do not read Catholic papers because they do not appreciate them. Their sense of “news” has been debased by the peaceful penetration of the secular press. They must be educated to realise that the abnormal and sensational should not be the normal food of the mind, that the workings of God’s Church on earth are better “copy” and should interest Catholics more than the eccentricities of a monkey in the London Zoo, or the publicity stunts of American filmdom. They must be educated, too, to the Catholic outlook in its etymological sense—to the realisation that the activities of the Church all the world over are of concern to Irish Catholics, and that they are at least as worthy of record as the secular affairs with which the columns of our papers are filled. That secular affairs should not be of interest, or should not be reported or read, I do not for one instant wish you to think, but I want to indicate the mistake of those who say, in defence of their apathy: “We get elsewhere all the Catholic news we want.” It is the Protestant mind that speaks in

them. They do not get all they *need*, even though recent developments here in the Catholic Press have exercised a good influence in this respect over the ordinary press of the country.

Secondly, people must be urged to support the Catholic Press. The Catholic Truth Society has already undertaken this additional branch of activity—its slogan “A Catholic paper in every Catholic home”—and it has done much by canvass and other action. But much remains to be done. Here we might profitably copy secular methods. I have been pestered recently by people canvassing for English papers. I understand this canvassing is being carried on from house to house throughout the country. We want similar energy infused into the work for the Catholic Press. Notwithstanding all its members are doing, the Catholic Truth Society has to acknowledge that it has not found delivery of Catholic papers by adults possible, but I have already mentioned that delivery is undertaken in France by ladies of high social status. There is just one point for improvement.

I have shown previously the value of a Catholic Press—I say now that no valid argument can be urged against its support. Those who say that it does not appeal to them ought to ask themselves seriously wherein lies the fault. I believe I am right in saying that those who decry Catholic papers are those who have never read a Catholic paper, who are lacking in proper interest in their religion. It has been found so in America, it has been found so in Australia. And if the Catholic papers are deficient in any respect, the way to remedy the deficiency is to support them. Mere destructive criticism is useless. Support them and so supply the funds necessary to keep a paper in the highest class. That is what other countries have done. And it has been found that when increased support was given to the Catholic Press, its quality and standing improved.

Hand in hand with the general introduction of the Catholic Press into the home should go its introduction into every place where reading matter is supplied—into libraries, reading-rooms, barbers’ shops, professional men’s waiting-

rooms. It has been done on the Continent—it can be, and ought to be, done here.

A campaign conducted on the lines I have suggested, of education and organisation, will work wonders in the strengthening of genuine Catholic opinion in Ireland. But its greatest effect will be on the young, who will be the nation's men and women to-morrow. Inspired and encouraged by the Catholic Press, educated by it in the principles which are to guide the solution of all the problems that will confront them, living through it in the world-unity of the Catholic Church, proud of her glories and jealous of her rights, they will be ready, when the time comes, to assume their diverse responsibilities in the nation's life, their minds adjusted to a Catholic outlook, their opinion attuned to Catholic truth, their wills disciplined to Catholic practice. When, through the Catholic Press, has been created such a strong body of Catholic opinion exerting its influence and leavening the whole mass, Ireland will be a Catholic nation in the fullest sense of the term.

# WORK

## FOR THE

# LAITY

In the matter of developing the external side of Catholicism, there is work for the Catholic laity. It is primarily the work of bishops and priests, but the CATHOLIC laity can also help immensely in the development of the external aspect of our faith, and I am glad to see that all over the country there are a great many young men and women devoting their energies to the spread of Catholic Truth.

—*His Grace the Archbishop of Cashel*  
At Thurles, January 27, 1928.

**JOIN YOUR LOCAL BRANCH OF  
THE CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY.**

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