

The Church with the Open Door Part 2

Welcoming Converts from the Professions

By H. A. Johnston, S.J.

Australian Catholic Truth Society No.1233 (1956)

These articles appeared originally in The Australian Messenger of the Sacred Heart and are here reprinted. The limitation of space imposed by their periodical form precluded anything like completeness in the enumeration of converts of any particular class. Only selected examples have been given of a phenomenon which has surely a profound significance both for those within and those without the Church. An effort has been made to be accurate, but in such a mass of names, dates, and biographical details, errors are possible. Some of the statements are to be taken as true at the time of writing, 1954. St. Mary's, North Sydney, Easter, 1955.

Sections I to VI will be found in "The Church with the Open Door - Part 1 - Welcoming Converts from Aristocracy and Literature" A.C.T.S. No. 1231, and can be read or down-loaded from this website.

7. CLERICAL CONVERTS

By clerical converts we may understand those who have been clergymen before their conversion or priests after their conversion or both. Perhaps a few relatives of the clergy may be mentioned, whose cases have special interest. The modern convert movement in England is considered to have begun with John Henry Newman, perhaps the most distinguished member of this class. The influence of his conversion is still at work, though more than a hundred years have now passed since that event. The sacrifice that was entailed for him is clearly revealed in a letter he wrote to his sister, Mrs. J. Mozley, when she had pleaded with him not to desert his position in the Church of England: "At my time of life men love ease. I love ease myself. I am giving up a maintenance involving no duties, and adequate to all my want's. What in the world am I doing this for (I ask myself this), except that I think I am called to do so?... I have a good name with many; I am deliberately sacrificing it. I have a bad name with more! I am fulfilling all their worst wishes, and giving them their most coveted triumph. I am distressing all I love, unsettling all I have instructed or aided. I am going to those whom I do not know, and of whom I expect very little. I am making myself an outcast, and that at my age. Oh, what can it be but a stern necessity which causes this?"

I can do no more than mention some of the distinguished men who came into the Catholic Church about the same time as Newman: Allies, chaplain to the Anglican Bishop of London, and Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford; Sebastian Bowden, Lieutenant in the Scots Guards, and afterwards priest of the Brompton Oratory; Right Rev. Robert Coffin, parson, later priest and Catholic Bishop of Southwark; Henry James Coleridge, Fellow of Oriel, parson, brother of Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, brother-in-law of an Anglican Bishop of Oxford, grand-nephew of the poet, and a Jesuit

after his conversion; Canon Lord Archibald Douglas; Frederick William Faber; Father George Harper, S.J., the metaphysician, brother of an Anglican bishop; Hon. and Rev. William Law, son of a Lord Chief Justice, Lord Ellenborough, and all his family; Rev. David Lewis, Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford, translator of the works of St. Teresa; Archdeacon (afterwards Cardinal) Manning; Oakley, Fellow and Chaplain of Balliol, and Prebendary of Lichfield; Rev. John Hungerford Pollen, Fellow of Merton, and his wife (two of their sons became Jesuits); Rev. George Dudley Ryder (son of an Anglican Bishop) and his wife and sister (three of his sons became priests); Ambrose St. John, close friend of Newman; Rev. Thomas Wilkinson, later a priest and Catholic Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle; Ven. Robert Wilberforce, Fellow of Oriel, Canon of York and Archdeacon, brother of a well-known Anglican bishop, with two of his brothers and other members of the family, among them the only daughter of the bishop; and a host of others.

It is, indeed, an impossible task to give any idea of the number of clerical converts in one short article. There have been whole religious communities, like the Anglican Benedictines of Caldey, who came over in 1913. One of these, now (1954) Abbot of Prinknash (pronounced "Prinnage") recently visited Australia. There have been similar conversions of whole communities of Anglican nuns, in England, in America, and not long ago in our own Pacific Islands. At least four convert priests could be mentioned who rowed in Oxford and Cambridge boat-races; more than this number who have become Catholic bishops (one of them a former assistant Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages at St. Andrew's University and, like his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, a minister of the established Church of Scotland); great preachers like Father Maturin (who went down with the *Lusitania*), and Mgr. Vernon Johnson, whose conversion caused a sensation in Anglican circles.

In the *Lost Lectures* of Maurice Baring you will find a vivid portrait of a remarkable lady, wife of the Rev. Francis Warre Cornish, Vice-Provost of Eton, and niece of Thackeray. The Cloisters, Eton, was a strange place to find a convert to the Catholic Church; but hardly so strange as the Kentish vicarage where, till recently, dwelt the convert wife of a retired Anglican bishop. Her daughter was also a convert. A notable case was that of a clergyman who was educated at Winchester and Oxford, took orders in 1895, went to South Africa in 1898, and worked for twenty years among the lepers on Robben Island, founded a home for discharged lepers, a retreat-house, and a home for retired clergymen, became Canon of St. George's Cathedral, Capetown, in 1922, and Archdeacon in 1927, resigned and returned to England in 1931, and was received into the Church the following year, at the age of 67. The present Earl of Wicklow is a convert parson.

The relatives of well-known ecclesiastics would form an interesting list in itself. I have already mentioned a few, and here are some others. Dean Stanley was a well-known figure in his day; his sister became a Catholic. The late Algar Thorold, editor of the *Dublin Review* and author, was the son of an Anglican bishop. One of this bishop's daughters also became a Catholic, the Vicomtesse Sybil de la Bedoyere, mother of the editor of the *Catholic Herald*. Other converts from episcopal circles were a daughter of Maclagan, Archbishop of York, a daughter of Trench, Archbishop of Dublin, a brother-in-law of Tait, Archbishop of Canterbury (Rev. Edward Fortescue and his wife, parents of Father Adrian Fortescue, the authority on liturgy and the Eastern Churches), a nephew and niece of Whately, Archbishop of Dublin. The well-known writer, Mrs. Yeo, was a convert, and she was a grand-daughter of a Bishop of London (Blomfield). Mgr. Robert Hugh Benson was, of course, son of an Archbishop of Canterbury; Mgr. Ronald Knox is son of an Anglican bishop, and grandson of another. Christopher Hollis, author and publisher (he was once President of the Oxford

Union), is the brother and son of Anglican bishops. Within the last few years the wife of the Anglican Bishop of Shanghai became a Catholic; and one of her sons is a Trappist monk. There was some justification for Bishop Welldon, in his book of memoirs, *Forty Years On*, holding it as an argument in favour of celibacy among the Anglican clergy that "unmarried clergy do not beget sons who go over to the Church of Rome."

What brought all these, and so many others, into the Catholic Church? And what were their feelings when they were within? To get answers you must read some of the books they have written. If you want to know how an Anglican bishop was led to the Catholic Church, read *Salve Mater* of Frederick Joseph Kinsman, who was for eleven years Bishop of Delaware, and became a Catholic in 1919. A book by an earlier convert bishop, Dr. Ives, Bishop of North Carolina, *The Trials of a Mind*, would not be so easy to procure now. A really entertaining book is that of Father Vassall-Phillips, C.S.S.R., *After Fifty Years*. More serious is *The Unfinished Universe*, written by a distinguished Methodist minister, who began work on it, he says, without any suspicion that he should ever be anything else. He became a Catholic in 1935. A convert from Free Church (Presbyterian) ranks, Dr. Orchard, gives an account of his progress in *From Faith to Faith*. Full of interest is *Through the East to Rome*, by Father MacGillivray. A prominent New York clergyman who became a Catholic not many years ago, Dr. Selden Delany, has written *Why Rome?* and *Rome from Within*. Mgr. Vernon Johnson, already mentioned, gives the reasons for his conversion in *One Lord One Faith*. Such accounts are edifying reading, and can be a guide to us in helping others towards the light.

8. CONVERTS FROM THE ARMED FORCES.

The Catholic chaplain on an English flagship was talking to the Captain on the quarter-deck. The latter brought the conversation round to religion, and expressed a great admiration for the Catholic Church as a body that knew its own mind and was faithful to its principles everywhere. Accustomed to a service that was built up on authority, tradition, and discipline, he could appreciate a Church that exercised authority in matters of faith and morals, and he could not understand the position of any religious body that had not the will or the power to enforce unity of doctrine and belief. He ended the conversation with the words: "There is only one solution for all our modern problems, Padre, and only one institution that can save the world, and that is the Catholic Church." I can tell you the name of the chaplain, Father Essex, O.P., but not the Captain's, so I do not know if he has yet found the home towards which his convictions pointed so surely. But the views he expressed must reveal the mind of other distinguished naval officers who have actually joined the Catholic Church. Life at sea gives a man time to think, if he is that way inclined. Rear-Admiral Benson, of the United States Navy, and later head of the U.S. Shipping Board at Washington, found the faith at sea. He gave himself to serious thought about his religious position, and "While all alone at sea one day," he says, "on the old Constitution, I came to my decision, and was received into the Church soon after I landed at New York."

The greatest name, I suppose, in English naval history is that of Nelson. All his descendants are Catholics. His great-grand-nephew, fifth Earl Nelson, who died in 1951 at the age of 90, became a Catholic in 1888. The latest convert in this family that I know of is the wife of the third son of the Earl just mentioned; she became a Catholic in 1949, 33 years after her marriage. But in this article we have the old difficulty of making a selection of names among so many that could be listed. Two Vice-Admirals might be mentioned who were Aides-de-Camp to the King in the same year, 1939, of whom one became a Catholic in 1933 and the other 1935. The first, Vice-Admiral Hornell, C.B.,

C.M.G., C.B.E., had served at sea continuously from 1894 till 1928, and had won the D.S.O. in 1918. He was 56 years old when he entered the Catholic Church. He returned to active service in the recent war as Commodore of Convoys. The other, Vice-Admiral Thurm, visited Australia as Flag-Captain and Chief of Staff during the Empire cruise of the "Hood" in 1923-4. He became Chief of Staff to the Mediterranean Fleet, later Assistant Chief of Naval Staff, and finally commanded the First Cruiser Squadron of the Mediterranean Fleet till his retirement in 1935. It was in this year that he became a Catholic (in Malta) when he was 54. So it is not merely young and impetuous people who take this important step of embracing the Catholic faith.

The oldest navy convert I know of was one who came into the Church when I was young, Sir John Briggs (1894), Chief Clerk to the Admiralty. He was 86 when he became a Catholic, and his wife and daughter entered the Church about the same time.

Many of the naval officers who have joined the Catholic Church in our time saw service in the two Wars, and became Catholics in the course of the war or soon after. Commander Usher, for instance, was received into the Church by a naval chaplain at Mudros in 1917. Another, Commander Agar, who became a Catholic in 1920, won the D.S.O. and the V.C. during the war - which goes to show, incidentally, that a convert is not necessarily a molycoddle. Captain Phillimore, D.S.O., C.B.E. (son of Admiral Sir Augustus Phillimore) was in command of patrol work in different areas from 1914 to 1918, and Captain Oldham, who became a Catholic in 1918, served in the battle cruisers during the war, being decorated with the Cross of the Legion of Honour at Gallipoli, and receiving the O.B.E. for services at the battle of Jutland. A few names from the recent war: David Pelham James (son of Sir A. W. H. James), M.B.E., D.S.C., was in the R.N.V.R. from 1939 to 1946, becoming a Catholic in 1943; Commander John Farrow served with the Royal Canadian Navy, and was decorated by five countries. He is, perhaps, better known as the director of screen plays and husband of Maureen O'Sullivan; Commander Jackson, O.B.E., C.M.G., who during the war was Director-General of Middle East Supply Centre, became a Catholic soon after the war; and Rear-Admiral Jellicoe, another convert, is a nephew of Earl Jellicoe of First War fame.

Experiences at war impressed on men the universality of the Church. Wherever Catholics went they had the same doctrines, sacraments and sacrifice. It was an easy transition from this to universality in time. This comes out in a letter from Maurice Baring in France in 1914 to Dame Ethel Smyth:

"I went to Mass this morning, and it was nice to think I was listening to the same words, said in the same way with the same gestures, that Henry V and his 'contemptible little army' heard before and after Agincourt; and I stood between a man in khaki and a French Tommy, and history flashed past like a jewelled dream."

The war, too, brought home to people that the Catholic religion really meant something to those who professed it. Catholics wanted the sacraments, and their chaplains were there to administer them. An Anglican bishop has said in a lecture:

"The average practising Roman does know what to do when he has committed a mortal sin. I have seen, during the war, thirty-nine out of forty-three Roman Catholics on a ship go to Confession and Communion next day when the Roman Catholic Padre came on board. 'Did it make any difference?' you will say. I think it did. It was better than the hopeless indifference of most of my Church of England people."

Forty-four generals in the American Civil War became Catholics, among them General Sherman, who brought the war to a close, and General Longstreet, one of Lee's most trusted subordinates.

I have filled over twenty pages with a list of names from the English army which seemed to be of special interest, but space is limited. There was Earl Amherst, born 1896, educated at Eton and the Royal Military College, Captain and Adjutant in the Coldstream Guards, twice wounded, mentioned in despatches, M.C., who was received into the Church in 1917 at the age of 21. He returned to the army during the recent war. Another officer of the Coldstream Guards, Captain Butler-Thwing, became a Catholic in the same year, 1917, at the age of 26; he was afterwards Commandant of the Brigade of Guards School of Musketry. General Sir John Cowans, Quarter-Master-General, was received into the Church a week before his death in 1921. "It I am to die," he said, "I wish to do so in the Roman Catholic faith." Sir William Robertson says of him, in an Introduction to his life, "He was one of the ablest Quarter-Master-Generals that the British army has ever had." Many others could be added from more recent times, but our space is running out.

From the Air Force we must mention the chief of Britain's Fighter Command, Air Marshal Sir Basil Embry, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O. (and three bars), D.F.C., A.F.C., who became a Catholic in 1945. Group Captain Geoffrey Cheshire, an ace bomber pilot, won the V.C. in 1940, the D.S.O. in 1944 (and two bars), the D.F.C. in 1944, and entered the Catholic Church in 1949.

Cheshire now devotes himself to helping those who have been disabled, and has founded two homes for them.

A distinguished Anglican historian (Gairdner) has written:

"It was only after an able and despotic king had proved himself stronger than the spiritual power of Rome that the people of England were divorced from their Roman allegiance; and there is abundant evidence that they were divorced from it at first against their will."

The men who have come back to the Church from the armed forces have taken a practical step towards setting right an unhappy error of the past.

9. THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE.

It is most probably true that the large number of converts that comes from the armed forces is due to at least partly to the broadening effect of going to other lands and seeing religion as practised by other peoples. The same influence was no doubt at work in the case of some of the notable conversions that have taken place among members of the diplomatic service, with which I will deal in this article. The way in which the Catholic religion presents itself to the onlooker in strange surroundings is illustrated by some experiences of Mr. Penrose Fry, a convert clergyman and husband of the novelist, Sheila Kaye-Smith. His wife was on a lecture tour of America soon after both had been received into the Catholic Church. In New York they went to a midday Mass on a week-day and were surprised to find an unending stream of people receiving Holy Communion up to as late as 1.15 p.m. (This was before the days of the recent relaxation of the law of Eucharistic fast from 'from midnight onwards' to 'just three hours').

"We English," Mr. Penrose Fry writes, "no doubt are incapable of fasting, and like my compatriots I often find it difficult. But I was ashamed for my own country in the presence of all these people who loved Our Lord so much that they did what they did... to me almost superhuman. It was the first Friday in February in a New York winter, and one of the coldest winters for many years. The thermometer, even at midday, stood not many degrees above zero, while snow and ice were piled high in the streets.

"These people, most of them, lived in distant suburbs. They had risen early, and travelled into the city to their work in the discomfort of the 'subway' or 'elevated,' after waiting on some suburban platform in an icy blast. They had done a morning's work at their shops and offices... all without a bite to eat or a sup to drink. Now they renounced most of their brief lunch hour to get to the Altar rail. They would only have time for the hastiest meal, probably eaten standing at some crowded sandwich bar surrounded by a jostling, shoving throng, before they had to rush back to their work. It was amazing. It was something I had never dreamed of as being a possible human undertaking."

Later they found themselves in New Orleans, in the South, where it was not cold but heat that troubled them. "But the piety was just the same. On several occasions we could not get seats at all at the noonday Mass in the Jesuit church near our hotel. One could only stand and perspire and try to pray." On another occasion they visited a large Catholic educational establishment for girls. Mr. Fry was asked to serve the chaplain's Mass while he was there. "This I gladly consented to do," he writes, "and it was then that all further capacity for wonder left me. Every morning Holy Communion was given to no less than four hundred girls as well as the nuns - and attendance at Mass was not obligatory for the students on ordinary weekdays:"

The diplomatic service presents us with the names of many distinguished converts to the Catholic Church. It is not many years since we were reading the obituary notice of Lord Howard of Penrith, a convert who had a brilliant career as a diplomatist. He entered the diplomatic service in 1885, retired 15 years later and for some years led an adventurous life, fought in the Boer War, was captured and escaped, re-entered the diplomatic service in 1903, and served in many important posts. One of the most delicate was his mission to Sweden during the first World War, where he won the highest praise for his tact and discretion in handling the thorny subject of the Allied blockade. His greatest success, however, was his ambassadorship at Washington from 1924 to 1930. The Times wrote after his death: "His mission was a great personal triumph. He remained six years in the United States, and takes rank with Stratford, Canning, Lord Lyons, and Bryce, among the greatest of his predecessors. From the outset he created the pleasantest impression in both New York and Washington. No foreigner in his time aroused so steady and affectionate a sentiment as he did." It is worth noting that of the other great ambassadors mentioned by the Times, Lord Lyons was also a convert to the Catholic faith. Lord Howard of Penrith has published an account of his life in what the Times calls "two vivid and charming volumes"; they are entitled *Theatre of Life*. Speaking of his reception into the Catholic Church he writes: "From that day I can say that, although the first exaltation passed away in the hurly-burly of terrestrial occupations such as rubber-planting or diplomatic work, I have never looked back. Indeed, the security in the protection of mother Church has but grown from year to year."

Mention has already been made in these articles of the distinguished writer, Maurice Baring, heir presumptive to Lord Revelstoke. He followed a diplomatic career till he deserted diplomacy for literature. It has already been mentioned that some editions of his autobiography, *The Puppet Show of Memory*, unaccountably omit his account of his conversion and his striking comment on that event. (See section VI)

Count de Salis, who was to be British representative at the Vatican, became a Catholic early in his diplomatic career. Lord Holden, who was on the diplomatic staff at the Vatican, at Madrid, and then at Berlin, became a Catholic during the First War, when only 18. The Earl of Perth, who was Secretary General to the League of Nations from 1933 to 1939, and then Ambassador in Rome, was another convert. So was Herman Norman, who was Secretary to the British Delegation to the Peace

Conference in 1919. Sir Michael Palairet, K.C.M.G., who spent a long life in the diplomatic service, was a convert, together with his wife. He was Minister Plenipotentiary to Austria when it was overrun by the Nazis. The British Consul at Warsaw when the late war broke out was a convert, Frank Savery, C.B.E. Of special interest for Australians would be Sir David Victor Kelly, C.M.G., M.C., who is son of a Professor of Classics at Adelaide University. His latest post before his retirement was that of Ambassador to Moscow, 1949-1951. Peter Lunn, eldest son of Sir Arnold Lunn, is at the British Legation at Berne. Like his father, he is an expert skier and was on the British International Ski Team from 1931 to 1937, being captain for four years; and, like his father, he is a convert to the Catholic faith. He became a Catholic at the age of 20. Arthur F. Loveday, O.B.E., diplomat and literary man, became a Catholic in 1938, at the age of 60.

These are but a few out of many cases of converts from the diplomatic service. We may conclude with the mention of a few ambassadors' wives. Lady Austin Lee, wife of the British Commercial Attaché at Paris from 1896 to 1918, is a convert. The Hon. Lady Russell, who became a Catholic in 1927, was the wife of a British Minister to the Netherlands. The wife of the then British Ambassador at Moscow, Viscount Chilston, the wife of the British Ambassador at Paris, Rt. Hon. Sir Eric Phipps, and Lady Millington-Drake, wife of the British Minister to Uruguay, all became Catholics in the same year, 1930.

10. THE LEGAL AND MEDICAL PROFESSIONS

I have already spoken in this series about converts from the world of learning, but it may be well to give some special mention to members of the two professions named above. Here we are dealing with men accustomed to weigh evidence and search for truth - men, therefore, who will not lightly admit any claims put forward, still less the supreme claims of the Catholic Church. If, then, we find numbers of such men coming into the Catholic Church from outside, it is a strong additional argument that the claims of this Church are deserving of serious and sympathetic consideration.

We may reasonably, I think; place in this section a distinguished servant of Australia, Sir Hubert Murray, Lieutenant-Governor of Papua, not so long deceased. At his death the press was generous to his memory, not only here, but in England too. The London Times, in an obituary notice, wrote: "His 34 years of administration in Papua form one of the most satisfying achievements in Australian history, rare in the completeness with which he saw in his own lifetime the accomplishment of a policy cherished at first almost by him alone. He found Papua a territory of savages who practised cannibalism and head-hunting; he left it firmly set on the road to ordered government." A non-Catholic paper in Australia wrote that in his death "the Commonwealth of Australia has lost one of its most distinguished sons, whose work in Papua will long remain an example of the highest standards of British statesmanship as applied to a native dependency." But a point the papers would not be interested in is that he was a convert to the Catholic faith, and found in that faith the inspiration of his life. (Footnote: There is evidence that he was baptized by a priest, but he was not brought up in the faith.) A niece of his, also a convert, Rosalind Murray, daughter of Professor Gilbert Murray, of Oxford, has already been mentioned in these articles (see Section VI). She is author of *The Good Pagan's Failure* and other books.

But wherever we go in the British Commonwealth and Empire we find similar cases. Sir Thomas Garvin, who was Solicitor-General of Ceylon [now Sri Lanka] from 1915 to 1924, and Senior Puisne judge from 1935, was a convert to the faith, as was also a former Chief Justice of Ceylon, Sir Bruce Lockhardt Burnside who became a Catholic the year before he died. The Chief Justice of

Tanganyika, [now Tanzania] Sir Llewellyn Dalton, who died in 1949, was a convert, and Sir Walter Llewellyn Lewis, who was Chief justice of British Honduras, [now Belize] became a Catholic, with his wife, in 1930, the year of his death. A few years ago there died a Scots lawyer convert, Hon. Lord Moncrieff, who had been one of the ablest lawyers Scotland ever produced. He was Senator of the College of Justice and Lord of the Court of Session, and for a short time Lord Justice Clerk, the second highest judicial office in Scotland. He became a Catholic in 1923, at the age of 53, his wife having preceded him into the Church eleven years earlier. The Hon. Mr. Justice Solomon, K.C., was first a barrister, then a parson for eight years, after which he became a Catholic and resumed his practice at the Bar. He was made a judge of the Transvaal Provincial Division in South Africa in 1927 and retired in 1945.

Here again, as usual, the difficulty is to make a selection. Lord Brampton cannot be omitted, better known for many years at the Bar as Sir Henry Hawkins. He was about 80 when he became a Catholic, and he drily remarked that at least the step would not be put down to the impetuosity of youth. 1st Baron Greene, a distinguished scholar at Oxford, and later Lord Justice of Appeal and Master of the Rolls, and since 1949 Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, is a Catholic and (I am almost sure) a convert. John Cyril Maude, K.C., Member of Parliament from 1945 to 1951, and Recorder of Devizes from 1939 to 1944, became a Catholic as late as 1950. Sir John Nihill, K.B.E., M.A., M.C., son of a parson, formerly Attorney-General in British Guiana [now Guyana] and later Puisne Judge in Ceylon, has been since 1951 President of the Court of Appeal for East Africa. He entered the Church in Ceylon in 1940. Sir Hubert Wallington, K.C., appointed judge of the High Court of justice in 1944, having previously been Recorder of Birmingham, is a convert. Finally, we have the Right Hon. Sir Henry Slessor, P.C., K.C. He was a leader among High Anglicans, Member of Parliament from 1924 to 1929, Solicitor-General, and then Lord Justice of Appeal. He became a Catholic in 1948.

Physicians and surgeons are another class who are compelled by their profession to study facts and their explanation. It is often said that the scientific outlook is inimical to religion. The evidence already given in this series of articles disposes of that view. As a rule it is the superficial scientist who is opposed to religion; most of the really great scientists have been genuinely religious, and Catholic scientists have been foremost in many fields. The number of distinguished physicians and surgeons who have come into the Catholic Church from outside is remarkable. I can mention only a few. To begin with lady doctors, there is Kathleen Gamgee, for many years in Public Health departments, daughter of a well-known physiologist, Professor Gamgee; Letitia Fairfield, sister of Rebecca West, the novelist, senior medical officer of the London County Council from 1911 till 1948. She is also a barrister-at-law, and Assistant Editor of the *Medico-Legal Journal*. As an Anglican she was Chairman of the League of the Church Militant, and became a Catholic in 1923. Mary Kidd, author of several books on baby welfare, is another convert of about the same time, and Marian Ward, O.B.E., Chief Woman Inspector, and later Deputy Chief Inspector of the Ministry of Health.

Among men we have Sir Charles Gordon-Watson, K.B.E., C.M.G., F.R.C.S., etc., a distinguished London surgeon, and author of several well-known medical works; Ernest Groves, a President of the British Orthopaedic Association, and of the Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland, examiner in surgery at many British Universities, and an editor of the *British Journal of Surgery*; Eric Strauss, Physician to the Institute for Medical Psychology and Lecturer in Psychological Medicine in the University of London. Another is the Professor of Surgery at the

University of Sheffield, Professor Ralph Brockman; the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health, Sir John Charles; and Henry Pratt Newsholme, F.R.C.P., D.P.H., who is Professor of Hygiene and Public Health in Birmingham University; he became a Catholic, with his wife, in 1939. A recent example is Andrew Oliver Ross, M.D., Lecturer in the University of Liverpool, who became a Catholic in 1950.

The army medical service has contributed its quota. For example, in 1928 Lt.-Col. Trist, who had distinguished himself in the First War; came into the Church at the age of 48; in 1934 Lt.-Col. Overbeck-Wright, of the Indian Medical Service, became a Catholic at the age of 55; in 1937 another distinguished member of the Indian Medical Service was received into the Church at the age of 57; he was Major-General Sir Ernest Walker, K.C.I.E., F.R.C.S. (Edinburgh). He was the son of a Presbyterian parson, and after a distinguished career in the army in the First War he became Hon. Surgeon to the Viceroy of India, and Director of the Medical Services of India. One such example would be striking; how much more so when we find the example repeated over and over again.

11. MUSIC, ART AND THE STAGE.

So far in these articles it might be thought that too, much stress has been laid on the cold light of reason, and that other valuable qualities of the heart and of the artistic sense have been neglected. But people can be led to God, and to the Catholic Church, by their love of beauty.

A convert poet (Wilfrid Childe) has written: "For to me God was ever a Poet, and if He has His own especial religion, it would naturally be filled with His finest and most especial poetry. And I was not mistaken and have not been disappointed." So let us turn now to artists, architects, actors, and musicians in our enumeration of some noteworthy converts.

Among architects, without going back as far as the famous Pugin, we may mention Bently, the architect of Westminster Cathedral in the Byzantine style. The father - himself an architect - of the Catholic architect of Liverpool Anglican Cathedral was a convert. A distinguished name is that of Harry Goodhart-Rendel (grandson of Lord Rendel of Hatchlands), educated at Eton and Cambridge, a musician and an architect, and a convert to the Church. He was President of the Architectural Association, Slade Professor of the Fine Arts at Oxford, President of the Design and Industries Association, Director of the Royal Academy of Music, and a Governor of the Saddlers Wells Foundation. Shortly before the end of the war died Mr. F. R. Morley-Horder, son of Rev. Garret Horder, Congregational hymnologist, an architect of distinction who was responsible for the restoration of many old houses and churches; he was a convert of many years standing. John Edward Dixon-Spain, O.B.E., F.R.I.B.A., was also the son of a parson; he was the architect of many public buildings in various parts of the world. He became a Catholic at the beginning of the first World War, and in the second was Fine Arts Officer with the First United States and Second British Armies from Normandy to the Rhine. Another well-known convert architect is Ernest Tatham Richmond, F.R.I.B.A., who was architect to the War Graves Commission in France, and Director of the Antiquities Department of the Palestine Administration from 1927 to 1937.

Artists would naturally come next, and here we have a large field. Peter F. Anson, son of Admiral Charles Anson, C.B., M.V.O., first studied architecture, then joined the Anglican community at Caldey and became a Catholic in 1913 when this community came into the Church in a body. He always retained a great interest in the sea, and was one of the founders of the Apostleship of the Sea, which has done much good work for seafarers. He has written many books, which he illustrates

himself. Lady Butler, wife of General Sir William Butler, was a convert and is well known for her painting of battle scenes, "The Roll Call" and many others. Aubrey Beardsley was a famous black and white artist, and became a Catholic, as did his mother and sister. Another distinguished artist convert was Albert Chevallier-Taylor. Robin Darwin, a painter, Professor of Fine Art in the University of Durham, and later Principal of the Royal College of Art, is a convert. (His father is a famous writer on golf). The name of Eric Gill will be known to all; he became an earnest Catholic, together with his wife and family. Another artist who came into the Catholic Church is David Jones, whose works are found in the Tate Gallery, the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Sydney Art Gallery. Mention has already been made of Sir Walter Llewellyn Lewis, Chief Justice of British Honduras; his wife was a member of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours, and became a Catholic the same year as her husband (1930). With her we may group Lettice Ann McMunn, sister of Lt.-Gen. Sir Gregory McMunn; she was a Principal of Queen Anne's Studio and lecturer on art, becoming a Catholic in 1942.

Another well-known English woman artist convert is Joan Morris, who has done a lot for Catholic art. Margaret Rope, sister of a convert priest, became a Catholic at the age of 19, and a Carmelite nun 22 years later; she was an artist in stained glass. A fairly recent convert is Mrs. Joan Rothenstein, who has several books on art to her name; her husband, who is also a Catholic, is prominent in the art world of America and England, having filled many academic positions in both countries and been Director and Keeper of the Tate Gallery in London. Ernest Tristram, Professor Emeritus of the Royal College of Art, was the foremost authority on pre-Reformation English painting and an expert on the restoration and preservation of ancient paintings. Some of his work in this department was done in Westminster Abbey, Eton College, and the Houses of Parliament. Several hundreds of his drawings are preserved at the Victoria and Albert Museum. He died in 1952, having become a Catholic in 1914. His brother was Father Henry Tristram, an authority on Newman. Hubert Wellington, Lecturer in the History of Art at the Slade School from 1946 to 1959, having previously been Principal of the Edinburgh College of Art, became a Catholic in 1939.

Two sculptors may be added: Hew Martin Lorimer, who became a Catholic in 1941 and was followed by his wife, a portrait and landscape painter, and Mrs. Clare Sheridan, cousin of Sir Winston Churchill; she became a Catholic in Italy after the war and died in 1948.

The stage has provided a number of well-known converts. Among them we have a son and a daughter of Dame Sybil Thorndike, both noted actors, Ann and Christopher Casson. Ernest Milton, who has starred in many Shakespearean roles, became a Catholic in 1940; his wife, Naomi Royde Smith, also a convert, has already been mentioned in the section on literature. The famous Ellaline Terriss, wife of Sir Seymour Hicks, became a Catholic as far back as 1901 and passed her eightieth birthday in 1951. The actress Mary Newcomb came into the Church in 1949. Robert Speaight, one of the leading present-day actors, has been a Catholic since 1930. In the film world may be mentioned as converts Madeline Carroll and the German, Emil Jannings, who became a Catholic shortly before his death in 1950. The variety stage is represented by George Grossmith, George Mozart, and Wee Georgie Wood, and the ballet by Miss Emily Beecham, sister of the famous conductor, and Mr. Arnold Haskell, C.B.E., Director and Principal of Sadlers Wells School.

There is not much space left for musicians. The well-known English baritone, George Baker, became a Catholic in 1948. Mrs. Plunkett Greene may find a place here, too, as a daughter of a musician, Sir Hubert Parry (who had a strange prejudice against the Church), and wife of another, Harry Plunkett Greene. Among the names which are found in the musicians' library are Henry Field,

Henri Hemys, William Rockstro (Professor of Counterpoint in the Royal College of Music), Sir Richard Terry, A. Edmonds Tozer - all converts. So was Sir Charles Halle, founder of the Halle orchestra, and Sir Charles Santley, one of England's greatest singers. It may be of some interest to note that Maud Valerie White, composer of "When the Swallows Homeward Fly," "The Devout Lover," and other songs sung by Santley, was also, a convert to the Catholic faith.

12. AND WHAT DID THEY THINK OF IT?

There is one point concerning converts to the Catholic faith about which information might legitimately and usefully be sought. Granted that it is very arresting to find non-Catholic bishops, bishops' wives, sons, and daughters, Church dignitaries of every degree, men of science and learning, diplomatists, judges and lawyers, surgeons and physicians, admirals, army staff officers, actors, artists, architects, peers and peeresses, and prominent authors, coming into the Church in such numbers, the question may be put: What do they think of the church once they are in?

On this point we have an abundance of evidence, of which only a few examples can be quoted here. Fulton Oursler is a well known name; he became a Catholic in 1945, and was followed later by his son and daughter.

He writes: "My experience since becoming a Catholic has been constantly exciting, and I can say with conviction that there is not treasure enough in the earth to tempt a convert away from the constantly increasing spiritual satisfaction of his new estate." It is hard for the outsider to realize this.

Professor George B. Harrison, of the University of Michigan, who was received into the Church with his wife in 1947, has written: "One cannot understand Catholicism until one becomes a Catholic... Once experienced, it is infinitely and increasingly satisfying. Our one regret is that it took us nearly 30 years to find our way through the door."

Evelyn Waugh has something much the same: "At the age of 26 I was received into the Catholic Church, to which all subsequent experience has served to confirm my loyalty... My life since then has been an endless delighted tour of discovery in the huge territory of which I was made free... From time to time friends outside the Church consult me. They are attracted by certain features, repelled or puzzled by others. To them I can only say from my own experience: 'Come inside. You cannot know what the Church is like from outside.' "

One of the things which converts most appreciate is the sense of freedom which the faith brings them. "I have been overwhelmed with the feeling of liberty," wrote Mgr. Knox soon after he came into the Church, "the glorious liberty of the sons of God."

The opposite is often believed, and asserted, but the Catholic knows: "Tell a Catholic convert that he has lost his liberty," writes Chesterton, "and he will laugh."

A leading free-lance journalist of America (Gretta Palmer) gives her experiences: "Five years ago I was a prisoner in a bright, bleak narrow cell which I called the universe... For forty years I had lived, with ups and downs, inside the cell called atheism... That sense of having obtained a north on your compass is one of the great gifts the convert enjoys... But the strangest effect on a convert to Catholicism is the sense of liberation."

Professor Willis D. Nutting, a Rhodes scholar with Oxford degrees, says: "If I were to name the greatest gain that comes from entering into the Church from outside I would say that it is depth... With this depth also comes freedom."

Rosalind Murray, daughter of Professor Gilbert Murray, has this to say: "So far from 'intellectual suicide,' Catholicism has been for me the door to a limitless new world of knowledge; so far from finding my thought stifled or thwarted, it has been stimulated in quite an unprecedented way... So far from being, as is so often supposed, a restraining and repressive force, the Church for me has been a continual source of life and growth."

It is the truth, Our Lord told us, that makes us free, and in the Catholic faith we have the truth. Lord Brampton, judge of the Queen's Bench, wrote: "Those who look for my reason for taking the important step I took so late in life, cannot have their expectations satisfied by me. It must suffice them to know that it was the result of my deliberate conviction that the truth - which was all I sought - lay within the Catholic Church. I thought the matter out for myself, anxiously and seriously, uninfluenced by any other human being, and I have unwavering satisfaction in the conclusion at which I arrived, and my conscience tells me it is right."

Senator Robert F. Wagner, Justice of the Supreme Court of New York, who was received into the Church in 1946, has written: "Once you have come to the Faith, it is difficult to understand how one could be content without it... It is as though a maze of thousands of different lines in utter confusion without end suddenly shaped themselves into a beautiful, harmonious, thrilling picture."

The Church is, in truth, the City of Peace. "That is why," writes Sheila Kaye-Smith, "most converts have so little to say about themselves after joining the Church. Their history is like the history of a happily married pair - not half so interesting as if it had not been half so happy."

Dom Bede Camm has thus expressed himself: "Long years have passed since these lines were written, and the years have brought many changes - but they have not brought disillusionment or regret. Rather, on the contrary, every succeeding year has brought succeeding gladness and growing thankfulness to Him who thus wondrously led us out of the City of Confusion into the City of Peace."

Another distinguished convert and famous preacher, Father Maturin, who was one of the many lost when the Lusitania was torpedoed in the First War, has left his experience on record: "There is a strange sense of coming to a land and amongst a people to whom you always belonged, though you did not know it... There has been an ever-deepening sense of certainty and security and peace, with moments of intense realization of the glory and strength of the City of God, whose walls are salvation and whose gates are peace."

It is the same story no matter how far back we go. The sister of Gladstone wrote about a hundred years ago to Mrs. Bellasis when the latter became a Catholic: "The Cardinal has informed me that you are so happy as to have been received into the Church, and I embrace this occasion of renewing my very early acquaintance with you in offering you warm and sincere congratulations... The untold consolations of a Catholic are lightly won by whatever the world can inflict."

These quotations will help to meet the assertion, so often recklessly made, that many converts regret the step they have taken.

Chesterton once wrote: "At least six times during the last few years, I have found myself in a situation in which I should certainly have become a Catholic, if I had not been restrained from that rash step by the fortunate accident that I was one already."

Monsignor R. H. Benson, son of an Archbishop of Canterbury, should be a trustworthy witness, and this is what he has to say about the possibility of going back to where he came from: "It is of no use to pile up asserverations, but, in a word, it may be said that to return from the Catholic Church... would be the exchange of certitude for doubt, of faith for agnosticism, of substance for shadow, of brilliant light for sombre gloom, of historical, world-wide fact for unhistorical, provincial theory. I do not know how to express myself more mildly than that; though even this, no doubt, will appear a monstrous extravagance."

Another convert clergyman of our own day (Father G. J. MacGillivray) may be given the last word: "It would be like wanting to go back to a weird and impossible nightmare, where everything is topsy-turvy, in which things happen without any logical sequence, and without rhyme or reason. It would be like leaving civilization and returning to barbarism, or like a man who found his way home going out again to lose himself in the mist."

The conclusion to which this series of articles may well lead us is that we can all - cradle-Catholics and converts together - rejoice in the great gift of faith which has been given us, and we all should do our best to share that blessing with as many as possible of those who are outside the Fold.

Nihil Obstat: W. M. COLLINS, Diocesan Censor. Imprimatur: + D. MANNIX, Archiepiscopus Melbournensis. 1955.
