

The Skeptic.

"Sincerely Perplexed" wants an answer to some arguments of a blasphemous skeptic. For a detailed answer a personal interview would be necessary. Call during office hours if you want this. A few general observations can be set down here:

1. The position of the skeptic attacking the Catholic Church is that of a shyster lawyer attacking a decision of the Supreme Court. We are in possession of the truth, and we not worry. Faith gives us assurance -- and history makes assurance doubly sure by the knowledge that such attacks have been made -- fruitlessly -- for all time.

2. Your skeptic needs the baptism of fire. Chateau-Thierry put the fear of God into the hearts of many sinners, even before they left this country. Attendance at Mass was wonderful at Faris Island after news came of that battle. Many a man who was willing to take a chance on Hell lost his bravado when he saw how slender is the thread of life.

3. "The soul that practices repression and self-denial in this world in the belief that it will receive in return glory and luxury in a world to come doesn't strike us as much worth saving."

A business man doesn't look at it in that way. He won't hire a man who isn't willing to practice self-denial and repression. How many of us work for the love of work? How much would you give for a man who welters whenever he has to do something hard?

A strong character is developed only by hard work and hard knocks. Your skeptic says effectively that a man who will give his life for a principle isn't worth saving. He would make a fine defender of his country. Read the "Lives of the Saints" (pamphlet rack); read a life every day and see whether the characters there depicted are worth saving. Stack them up against a row of jelly-fish picked up at random on the Boul Mich.

4. "Continued dwelling on the reward that is to follow existence strikes us as a rather cheap and mercenary way of looking at life."

It is a mercenary way, and the Church holds it out as an attraction only because men like your skeptic can be won to God only by selfish motives. The strong character passes that motive: he looks into the chalice of Gethsemane, and he weeps for his sins; he beholds the scourging and he detests sensuality and impurity; he stands beneath the cross of Calvary, he lets the precious blood drip down upon his head, and he exclaims: "If God can love like this, let me Serve Him on my hands and knees all the days of my life."

5. "The person who dies in the firm expectation of a better life hereafter seems to us to be a confessed failure."

Christ Himself was the greatest failure the world has ever known -- from the point of view of the world. And yet the world owes everything to Christ, for without Christian principles luxury would have destroyed civilization centuries ago.

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