

"A Call to Service."

Under this heading the Ave Maria published last Saturday the following article:

Mr. Rupert Hughes, a novelist of sorts, declares that Christianity is "unberable bestial" and that, having broken entirely with the Churches, he is at last completely happy as a pagan. Mr. H. L. Mencken, whose talents are mainly devoted to shocking the Babbitts, writes of the recent self-inflicted death of a renegade Catholic: "It was almost the ideal finish.... Like any other great poet, he must have thought long about suicide as the best means to end things when the time should come.... It was the best way out. A good life -- and a good death." In a book called "Up from Methodism," recently published, Mr. Herbert Asbury celebrates his emancipation from all forms of religion. Similarly, Mr. Theodore Dreiser, who was once a Catholic, in his "Hoosier Holiday," scoffs at all creeds, while he particularly inveighs against the Church as being, at best, the kill-joy of life.

These are chance references noted in a week's reading. They could, without doubt, be augmented indefinitely. It is not enough that paganism should be actually rampant, an obvious fact, but it must have its apologists, its propagandists, its panegyrists, its glorifiers, as well. The children of darkness are busily at work, spreading the darkness. They at least cherish no delusions as to where they stand: they know they stand outside the Church and in full defiance of it. In this they have given us a good example; it is the one thing we can learn from them, namely, their clean-cut and emphatic rejection of compromise.

If one were to attempt the task of drawing up a list of Catholic creative writers, such as novelists and essayists, who have accepted and answered the frank challenge of this modern paganism, the task might be quickly dispatched. Outside of a mere handful of "intellectuals" in England, where are such writers to be found? Who is the Catholic American novelist that carried his faith like a sword, as Rupert Hughes and Theodore Dreiser battle under the black banners of their unbelief? One writer only comes to mind, of some half-dozen who have a wide American public: Mr. Frank Spearman, in "Robert Kimberly" and in "The Marriage Verdict." For the most part, the judgment of Mr. Compton Mackenzie may be accepted as it stands in a paper lately contributed to America: "I do not recognize in Catholic novelists as a body the least tendency to grapple with life as a whole; and despairing though the task may seem in this complicated age, one might expect something more than sectarian writing from the only writers who have the Truth." Mr. Mackenzie is referring here to the professedly Catholic writer. But what of the Catholic writer whose Catholicity is rigidly excluded from all that he writes, who can be distinguished from the pagan only because they insist upon it, not he?

"We shall need an army of writers," says Father Owen Dudley, in the Catholic Times, "theologians to answer the Modernists, philosophers to answer the Materialists. Could we not also call upon our own big Catholic novelists to oppose this present degradation of the novel to a level of mere sexual appeal? Could we not even call upon our novelists to write novels definitely for the Faith? Msgr. Benson set them a magnificent example."

There is a call to service. Intellectual and moral compromise is simply an impossible position. The whole world knew where Msgr. Benson stood. Alas, that his days among us were few! The whole world knows where Chesterton and Belloc stand today, and where Helen Parry Eden and Mrs. Wilfred Ward stand. We are not without protagonists of the Faith in America, but they are few in the ranks of the creative writers.

Prayers.

George Erwin, Tom Markey, Charles Lennon and Leo Faiver ask prayer for relatives who are ill.