

Question II. What does it matter what a man believes, so long as he behaves himself?

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin
October 7, 1936

Ill, mother of Jack Werner, class '32; grandmother of student, Mr. Thomas Magee.

Attention, All Students!

Through the pages of the Bulletin, Mr. Lunn is to handle certain modern difficulties that have been put to him personally, many of them several times, by young people most of whom are neither Catholics nor Christians. The questions are not merely academic. They are the kind that you will frequently bump up against in your everyday lives.

Here is the method that he will follow. He will state his question one day in the Bulletin. That day you are to start to think about, and to discuss among yourselves, the particular difficulty he proposes. In fact, the whole purpose behind his plan is to get you to think out answers for yourselves, not merely to remember someone else's solutions. If you are wise, after much thought and discussion, and before you see his answer, you will sit down and write out briefly your own response. The day after he states his difficulty, he will give his answer in the Bulletin. Your own solution, together with his, you should carefully file.

Shortly before Christmas, Mr. Lunn will conduct an examination based upon these questions and answers. Any student of the University will be eligible to compete in this examination. To two students of each class--freshman, sophomore, junior, senior (and to two graduates)--who make the best showing in their respective classes, Mr. Lunn will give prizes. Furthermore, the new Chesterton medal (now being designed) will be awarded upon the results of this examination and upon the quality of an essay to be written according to rules that will be announced later. Today, Mr. Lunn starts with a question that half-baked followers of Freud are very fond of asking:

Question I. Psychologists teach that religion is just a case of wish-fulfilment. People who are frightened of death invent an imaginary world beyond.

To give you an idea of the kind of answer that you should try to formulate, we shall, for this first time only, publish Mr. Lunn's reply in the issue that contains his question.

Answer: To begin with, always suspect bosh when you see a sentence beginning, "Psychologists teach," "Science teaches." These are all ways of saying, "I think." A real scientist doesn't say, "Science teaches." He says, "The evidence suggests that....."

So Christianity is a case of wish-fulfilment, is it? People invented the nice cheery warming belief in Hell because they wanted to go there? But this wish-fulfilment argument cuts both ways. If a man specializes in adultery, his form of wish-fulfilment will lead him to disbelieve in a future life in which he may be called to account for his sins.

Nor is a belief necessarily false because it's pleasant. This prejudice against pleasure in belief is just a throw back to our puritan background, a new form of prohibition. Don't drink wine because it's exhilarating. Don't believe in immortality because it's heartening.

And do you prove that cows are figments produced by wish-fulfilment because a hungry man's mouth waters at the sight of beef?

What would you think of a lawyer who opened his case: "Please pay no attention to the lawyer on the other side. You see, he is very anxious to win his case. His arguments are merely due to a wish-fulfilment complex." In religion as in the law court, arguments must be met by arguments.

"No case. Abuse the attorney" was the old motto. The new tactic is "No case. Psycho-analyze your opponent." What we need in the modern world is a return to the old medieval practice of meeting arguments with arguments. It is the arguments for the Faith that matter, not the psychological motives which induce people to join (or to leave) the Catholic Church.

MASS THURSDAY of St. Bridget, p. 1009.

PRAYERS: (deceased) father of Mr. Vay Gallagher, friend of university; grandmother of Art Madriulena (Brown.). Ill, grandmother of Dave Meskill (Carr.). Six spec. ints.