

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin
February 19, 1937.

This Roman Index.

"I read the other day in the Bulletin a condemnation which you made red hot because some books advertised were on the Index. Doesn't the Index show considerable intolerance? Isn't it treating Catholics of mature age like little children?"

Thanks for that "red hot." (The Robertson's Store has courteously promised to discontinue the sale of the objectionable books.) Now to your objection. You are not allowed by the State to hobnob with the inmates of a house under quarantine, say for small pox. Is that intolerance? The State will not permit you, even if you're grown up, to buy and use narcotics. Is that intolerance?

The man who says there are no bad books but only bad minds is just as silly as the fellow who says there are no bad things to eat and drink but only bad stomachs. You know and the Church knows the mischief that comes through the print-dissemination of lies, errors, and immorality. The State knows something about that mischief, too. Ask those who are fighting the Communists here in the United States, in Mexico, or in Spain. Well, the Index is merely one of the means that the Church uses to fight that sort of mischief.

The Catholic Church stands alone for something very definite: for the religion of Jesus Christ. Alone she is zealous, as Christ was zealous, in keeping that religion intact for her children. If she were uncertain about her divine mission, or if she were not sure that her doctrines and morals are divine, perhaps she too wouldn't bother about an Index.

Why Did God Do It?

"If God knew that some men would go to Hell, why did He ever put them in the world?"

God alone knows His own mind fully. But it seems from what He has done that He wants creatures to come to Him freely in love while the possibility lies open to reject Him in hate. Something peculiarly noble about that kind of tested love seems to please God.

It is true that by grace God could have predetermined all men to an inevitable Heaven. But that would have been something like a father who would chain his boy to a chair and then gloat over the fact that the boy didn't steal jam from the pantry. God did foresee that some men would go to Hell. He also foresaw the first Christmas and the Last Supper and Calvary and all devout Masses and Holy Communions offered up to the end of time. He foresaw Christ's mercies lavishly spent in innumerable confessionals throughout the world. He foresaw the heroic lives of selfless saints and martyrs, of brave, holy missionaries, of all good earnest men and women. The heroic sincerity and intensity of the love manifested by such souls must have captivated God. Foreknowing that all men of good will can with comparative ease get to Heaven through the merits of Jesus Christ, God issued His fiat in creation. That fiat spelled eternal doom only to men of unconvertible bad will.

The foreknowledge of God does not foredoom man to Hell. I see Jake as I write prepare himself, then jump from a twentieth story to his death. My present knowledge does not cause Jake to jump. If I had foreseen ten years ago that Jake would jump my foreknowledge would not have caused the action. Man by his own free will takes the road to Hell and holds to that rocky road stubbornly to his last breath against all warnings and pleadings. You say, however, that God by His omnipotent power could force all men's wills. God could but He doesn't. If He did He could glory in men's fidelity about as much as a father could gloat if he chained his boy to a chair and thus kept him out of the pantry.

PRAYERS: (deceased) grandmother of Jack Osborn (Br.) 1st anniv.; sister of Jim Karr. Ill, aunt of Hugh Murphy '34; sister of Jim Karr (Br.); mother of Sr. Baptista; uncle of William Riley (Dill.); father of Kay Naber '33; mother of John Beer (Badin); friend of Michael Clouse (Ly.); Stanley Partyka (How.); Rex Weaver (Sor.); K.C. Lattimer.