

POINT OF VIEW

ANGELIC COMFORT FOR CONVERTS

Frequently, there is a feature in conversions to the Catholic Church from other forms of Christianity which causes perplexity to those around the convert and sometimes excites their contempt; which not infrequently perplexes and almost annoys the convert himself (and I speak from a personal experience which, though belonging to a distant past, is so intimate that I am obliged here and now to seek refuge in anonymity)—a feature, however, which seems to be wonderfully explained by the theology of St Thomas (though I confess to not having discovered this till recently).

In the Summa 2-2, Q. VI, the Saint discusses the *cause* of faith, and he concludes that though, of course, some kind of 'preaching' and some kind of 'evidence' is required for the production of faith, yet the true and real cause of faith is a *divine interior instinct which urges consent*. The Holy Doctor takes the instance of two men who hear the same preaching or witness with their eyes the same miracle, and then one believes and the other does not; but he says expressly that this particular instance is only illustrative, and so we can safely apply his principles to modern converts from fragmentary to integral Christianity.

Here, then, is the situation. Two Anglican clergymen read the same books; are familiar with the same arguments for and against conversion to 'Rome'; have similar experiences in their Anglican ministry and so forth;—and yet one remains where he is, while the other takes the great and glorious step. Why? Those who believe in the one, holy, catholic and Roman Church, and follow the teaching of the Angelic Doctor, have a plain answer: because one of the two clergymen is by an inward instinct urged to become a convert, and the other is not. This, I say, explains perfectly why the convert so often experiences a strange unwillingness to speak of what is going on in his mind. He feels instinctively that reasons which powerfully move him, if put to others will seem weak and ineffective and may even be dubbed trite. He may perhaps feel a frantic desire to discover other and more conclusive reasons, and be worried because he cannot. Vain quest!—and *nihil ad rem*.

But there is something deeper still. Though scarcely, perhaps, realizing it himself, the convertend (if I may be allowed such a word) is in possession of a sacred secret which he must not betray: he is being personally led by God. So St Thomas.

Much more, Mr Editor, could be said on this subject, but I would not trespass on your space. I venture to think, however, that this communication belongs to the LIFE OF THE SPIRIT and I trust that it is something more and better than attempted self-justification.—IDIOTES