

Home Reading

October 20, 2012

When a while back these “Comments” advised readers to fortify their homes in case public bastions of the Faith might, due to the wickedness of the times, prove to be a thing of the past, a few readers wrote in to ask just how homes might be fortified. In fact various spiritual and material means of defending home and family have been suggested in previous numbers of the “Comments,” notably of course the Holy Rosary, but one fortification has gone unmentioned which I think I would try in place of television if I had a family to defend: reading aloud each night to the children selected chapters from Maria Valtorta’s *Poem of the Man-God*. And when we had reached the end of the five volumes in English, I imagine us starting again from the beginning, and so on, until all the children had left home!

Yet the *Poem* has many and eloquent enemies. It consists of episodes from the lives of Our Lord and Our Lady, from her immaculate conception through to her assumption into Heaven, as seen in visions received, believably from Heaven, during the Second World War in northern Italy by Maria Valtorta, an unmarried woman of mature age lying in a sick-bed, permanently crippled from an injury to her back inflicted several years earlier. Notes included in the Italian edition (running to over four thousand pages in ten volumes) show how afraid she was of being deceived by the Devil, and many people are not in fact convinced that the *Poem* truly came from God. Let us look at three main objections.

Firstly, the *Poem* was put on the Church’s Index of forbidden books in the 1950’s, which was before Rome went neo-modernist in the 1960’s. The reason given for the condemnation was the romanticizing and sentimentalizing of the Gospel events. Secondly the *Poem* is accused of countless doctrinal errors. Thirdly Archbishop Lefebvre objected to the *Poem* that its

giving so many physical details of Our Lord's daily life makes him too material, and brings us too far down from the spiritual level of the four Gospels.

But firstly, how could the modernists have taken over Rome in the 1960's, as they did, had they not already been well established within Rome in the 1950's? The *Poem*, like the Gospels (e.g. Jn.XI, 35, etc.), is full of sentiment but always proportional to its object. The *Poem* is for any sane judge, in my opinion, neither sentimental nor romanticized. Secondly, the seeming doctrinal errors are not difficult to explain, one by one, as is done by a competent theologian in the notes to be found in the Italian edition of the *Poem*. And thirdly, with all due respect to Archbishop Lefebvre, I would argue that modern man needs the material detail for him to believe again in the reality of the Gospels. Has not too much "spirituality" kicked Our Lord upstairs, so to speak, while cinema and television have taken over modern man's sense of reality on the ground floor? As Our Lord was true man and true God, so the *Poem* is at every moment both fully spiritual and fully material.

From non-electronic reading of the *Poem* in the home, I can imagine many benefits, besides the real live contact between parents reading and children listening. Children soak in from their surroundings like sponges soak in water. From the reading of chapters of the *Poem* selected according to the children's age, I can imagine almost no end to how much they could learn about Our Lord and Our Lady. And the questions they would ask! And the answers that the parents would have to come up with! I do believe the *Poem* could greatly fortify a home.

Kyrie eleison.