

they think nothing of the happiness of being able so easily and at all hours to approach the adorable Persons of Jesus Christ.

DEVOTION TO MARY.

The following valuable essay on the Catholic devotion to the Blessed Mother of God is translated from the French of the Abbe Ratisbonne, the brother of the celebrated Father Alphonse Ratisbonne, who was instantaneously converted at Rome, in the year 1842, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This translation was made by one of our own contributors, for Our Lady's magazine, the Ave Maria. We have been asked to give it, in extenso, to our readers, who will be delighted to see so able a presentation of the arguments in favor of the doctrine so dear to the Catholic heart, coming as it does from one born and reared in the black night of Judaism.

"Christianity has implanted in the heart of regenerated man two new affections; the one is the love of our brethren and is called charity; the other is the love of a mother, the love of Mary; and this other love has no name. It would be impossible to find in any language the word to express the sentiments which the Christian soul cherishes toward the Mother of Jesus Christ. It was during the last hour of redemption, when the most adorable Victim was consummating His sacrifice, that the mutual bonds which forever bind the members of the Church to the Mother of the Man God were formed. These bonds constitute the worship of Mary, a worship inseparable from the worship of Jesus; because the disciples, having become the members and brothers of the Lord, are by these same titles children of His Mother; and if they are children with Jesus Christ, they share in the sentiments of Jesus Christ: they love what Jesus Christ loved; consequently, they love Mary.

Now, love can keep possession: it must speak, it must sing; it must pour itself out—it must give vent to its emotions, its ardors, and its gratitude. The more closely we are united to Jesus Christ, the more do we feel the inviolable need of honoring and blessing His Mother. Most assuredly those who do not possess the spirit of Jesus Christ and do not belong to His family who feel nothing for Mary. In their eyes Christ is divided; He appears but as an abstract divinity, without affinity, without any intimate connection with the children of men grafted on His sacred humanity. It is the maternity of Mary that gives us a complete knowledge of Jesus Christ: she is the living link that connects Him with us. By her God becomes the child of God. Hence the veneration of Mary, when it is deep and intelligent, is the sign of the true faith, the condition of spiritual progress, the channel of prayer and of graces, and the secret of the sweetest and most fruitful consolations.

Nevertheless, the cultus of Mary and the worship of Jesus Christ, though they spring from one and the same principle and are indissolubly interwoven in the roots of Christian piety, are distinct and fundamentally different; for the worship of Jesus Christ is an adoration which can be rendered to God alone; whereas Mary is simply a creature, an immaculate Virgin, a woman blessed amongst all women, the Mother blessed amongst all mothers. Her worship is at bottom but the homage which all the children of men render to their mothers.

It would be childish to think that we rob Jesus Christ of the honors we render to Mary. We have already said: these honors differ both in character and in meaning; and it would be strangely calumniating the human heart to think you maintain the dignity of the son by disdaining the titles of his mother. The sentiments of nature, conscience, reason and experience, in accord with Holy Scripture and all tradition, rise up against those who reject Mary under pretext of offering their adorations to God alone.

How is it, O my God! that so many Christians, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, refuse to pay their devotions to the Virgin whose heart furnished that adorable blood? How can it be that those men, so attached in appearance to the letter of Holy Scripture, exclude Mary alone from the divine precept which commands all the children of men to honor their mother? Why do they act thus? They maintain, with a zeal which is not according to knowledge, that the Gospel nowhere prescribes devotion toward Mary; as if a man needed a command to induce him to love his mother! They fear to wound Jesus Christ by honoring Mary. But, I repeat it once more, is this fear Christian, is it natural? Is a son ever jealous of the glory of his mother? Would Jesus Christ have borne it had His disciples manifested indifference and coldness toward one whom He cherished Him self with most filial predilection? Will you deny our Divine Master, considering merely His humanity, the first of all sentiments—filial love, which He Himself deposited in the heart of every human being?

Moreover, it cannot be asserted that the Gospel does not authorize the worship of the Holy Virgin. We read, on the contrary, in the sacred books of both the Old and the New Testament the magnificent testimonies rendered to her by angels as well as by men, under most striking figures. The Old Testament shows her to us in the deference, replete with respect and love, manifested by Solomon toward his mother Bathsheba. The humble Esther, another figure of

Mary, is called to share the throne and diadem of the most powerful of kings. Judith, victorious over the enemies of her people, does not give umbrage to the high priest of Israel when she receives the blessings of grateful piety: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem! Thou art the joy of Israel! Thou art an honor to thy people!" These exceptional women were the types and living prophecies of her whom Genesis announces, at the very beginning of ages, as destined to crush the serpent's head; of her whom the patriarchs long for as the aura of salvation; whom the prophet Isaiah designates to the world in these words: "A Virgin shall conceive and shall be called Emmanuel, God with us."

Nothing is more significant than the numerous symbols under which the Spirit of God prefigures the promised Virgin. She is, according to the interpretation of the Fathers, the precious sion of the root of Jesse, of whom is born, like a divine flower, the Saviour of men; she is the holy land on which the dew of heaven descends in order that it may bear the fruit of life; she is the inconsumable bush in which God reveals Himself in the midst of the flames; she is the fleece of Gideon, which is covered with a mysterious dew while all things around it are parched with drought; she is the sacred ark containing God's covenant with the sons of Adam; she is the golden vase in which is preserved among the children of Jacob the manna of heaven; she is the cloud which pours over the thirsty earth a fruitful rain; she is the altar of sacred incense which draws down blessings from on high; she is the eastern gate of the Temple of which Ezekiel extols the magnificence; in fine, she is the heavenly spouse, seated at the right hand of God, resplendent with gold and with light, the Mother of the Holy of Holies and of the King of kings, celebrated by the prophets, sung in the psalms, saluted by the angels and the Seraphim.

The New Testament is more explicit still. How indeed, could the Evangelists have separated the name of Mary from the name of Jesus? Need we call to mind all the texts which record the participation of the Holy Virgin in all the acts of the redemption? The last look of the expiring Victim, like His first smile on entering the world, was for Mary. The gift of His Mother which the Heart of Jesus makes to the heart of man is the crowning of all His works of love. How deeply to be pitied are those who do not appreciate and will not understand these consoling truths! Strike out the name of Mary from the Gospel, and you deprive Christianity of its most tender and loving name.

According to the more moderate Protestants, Mary is but an ordinary woman "who could not have been the confidante of Christ; a woman about whom silence must be kept, as was done by the sacred writers, in order to prevent all superstition; a woman, in short, whose example could be of use to no one."

What! the sacred writers are silent! On the contrary, the Gospel is full of Mary. If you are afraid lest the worship of Mary give umbrage to the Son of God and lead you astray in the ways of superstition, do not read the Archangel's salutation: "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women!" Do not listen to Elizabeth when she cries out in ecstasy at the sight of Mary: "Blessed art thou amongst women! Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" Strike out also from the sacred books the texts which narrate the joys of Bethlehem. The Divine Child was still wrapped in swaddling clothes when the Eastern Kings and the shepherds of Ephraim brought Him their mystic offerings. Now, to whom were their burning words addressed if not to Mary? The Gospel expressly adds that these first adorers of the Incarnate God found the Child with Mary His Mother. Is it not in the Gospel also that we find the sublime sentence which sums up the first thirty years of our Saviour's life? He dwelt with Mary and Joseph. He was obedient to them. At that period of time, and long before the Gospel was written, the Virgin of Nazareth was herself the living book in which were inscribed the words and acts of her Divine Son. "She kept all these things in her heart."

Subsequently, at the marriage feast of Cana, Jesus changed water into wine; and the Evangelist who describes that great scene is careful to tell us that "Mary was there," and that it was she who by her intercession called forth this first of all miracles. Let Protestants tear out that page also of the Gospel which records that memorable exclamation of the woman of Israel who in order to honor the Divine Messiah exalts His Mother: "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the breasts that gave Thee suck!" Let them, in a word, strike out of the New Testament the canticle in which, in a divine ecstasy, the Virgin herself foretells her destiny and announces that she is to be the object of the blessings of all ages. "Behold, from henceforth," she says in her canticle of love, "all generations shall call me blessed!"

This extraordinary prophecy so clearly expressed, so manifestly fulfilled, is of itself alone the full justification of the cultus which the Catholic Church renders to Mary. It also contains the implicit demonstration of all other truths of the Gospel. For if the lowly daughter of David had not been indicated by the splendor of the Spirit of God, how could she have predicted so confidently her imperishable glory? How, in the humble sphere in which she lived, shut up in the mountain of

Judea, and long before the birth of Jesus Christ, could she have been able to announce to the world that all generations should proclaim her greatness?

There is nothing more striking in history than the fulfilment of this prediction; and there is no prophecy more widely known, more celebrated, more luminous; none is more clearly and universally realized. Wherever the sun of the Gospel has diffused its heat and its light, from pole to pole and throughout all ages, the sweet name of Mary shines forth beside the name of Jesus; and there is no Name that excites more enthusiasm, more sympathy, more love. Innumerable monuments, pyramids and religious pomp proclaim her glories. The arts have exhausted their magnificence in striving to express the love and admiration of the children of Holy Church for the Delphic, the God-bearing Mother. "Behold all generations do call her blessed!"

A CHALLENGER CHALLENGED.

An Anonymous Defamer of the Catholic Faith Effectually put on the Defensive.

International Catholic Truth Society. Brooklyn, N. Y., May 6, 1901. A "Challenge to the Roman Catholics of America" has been rather freely distributed recently in some of our larger American cities and towns. It offers a most magnificent reward to Catholics, clerical or lay, if they succeed in proving from God's Word certain doctrines taught and practiced (according to their notion) in the Church of Rome. Luckily for the opulent donor, the paper is unsigned, and consequently would not merit any recognition whatsoever, were it not for the boldness of the assertions and the extent of the circulation, thus possibly endangering the simple faith of our hardworking Catholics, and planting the poison of bigotry still deeper in the hearts of our separated brethren.

The "challenge," as it reads, is false to the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, consequently false to God's Word. It is, moreover, false to history, both Ecclesiastical and Profane, misleading as to the teaching and practices in the Catholic Church, illogical in its makeup, and a conglomerated massing and confusing of doctrine, discipline and what is neither doctrine nor discipline. When the foundation is weak, we must not expect much of the edifice. When the premises to an argument are false and illogical, we cannot hope to abide by the conclusion. Now what is the foundation, what are the premises whereon this ridiculous "challenge" is built? It is propped up on the following presumption, that God's Word is wholly and entirely contained in the Bible—that our sole Rule of Faith is the Bible. If we once succeed in showing that this theory is unsound, false to Christ's teachings and His Apostles', then our unknown challenger must needs find at least a logical basis for his tirade against the Church of Rome. He seems to have considerable regard for Scripture and the verity of its teachings. Now he will certainly admit that the Bible is a trustworthy book. In it he will find evidence that Christ is a Divine Messenger, and hence men should receive His message with due submission. But how can we receive this message with certainty since Christ died almost nineteen hundred years ago? What is the sure way of receiving this message unadulterated and faithful to the doctrines of the Divine Messenger? Chillingworth says: "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants." The Bible then, according to these, must speak of itself. Is this the method Christ desired to have employed in the spreading of His salutary message? There is only one answer to be derived from the New Testament and that is an emphatic NO. The Saviour taught by word of mouth, and we have no example either of writing being attributed to Him, or of any commission to His followers to adopt this system of teaching eternal truths. Their work during His earthly career is outlined in the tenth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel and in the ninth chapter of St. Luke's.

They are sent to preach, to deliver an oral message and to heal the sick. "And going out they went about through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere." Towards the close of the synoptic gospels we behold a final commission given to the Apostles. "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii, 19-20) "And He said to them, go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not, shall be condemned." (Mark xvi, 15-16) "And that penance and the remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all nations," beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke xxiv, 47) You shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth." (Acts i, 8) It is evident from these and kindred texts that Christ's method for the propagation of His work was oral instruction, preaching, hearing, witness, etc. Note well, moreover, that the Divine Messenger promised His infallible assistance to the Apostles: "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." And He

promised also to send them another Paraclete or Comforter to abide with them "forever," to teach them all truth and bring to their minds all things whatsoever the Saviour may have said to them. (Vide St. John xiv, 15-26) We find, then, from the Bible, depending upon its trustworthiness as an historical record, that Christ established a teaching body to make known His salutary truths to all nations even to the uttermost parts of the earth; that He promised His abiding presence and the presence of the Holy Spirit with this body representative as a guarantee against errancy and infidelity; that this presence was not merely to extend to the Apostles' life time, but was to continue with their successors "all days even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii, 20) "And I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete that He may abide with you forever." (St. John xiv, 16) Here it may be well to ask the Apostles understood Christ's commission? Surely their interpretation will be more authoritative than any ulterior to their time. Chapter after chapter of the Acts of the Apostles bears witness that they understood and carried out the commission of the Messiah in the manner stated above, viz., by oral instruction, preaching, hearing, witness, etc. (See Act I, 22; II, 14; III, 12; IV, 20, etc.)

Then as to the Epistles or Letters of St. Paul, James, Peter, John, Jude, they are chiefly a supplement to the Apostle preaching (e.g., I Cor. xi, 2; II Cor. xi, 4; Gal. i, 8; Ephes. i, 13; St. James i, 22; I St. Peter i, 22; II St. Peter i, 20; St. Jude i, 3). There is but one exception, and this even bears us out when we assert that the Bible is not the sole Rule of Faith. It is found in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, verse 14: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistles." Furthermore, the Apostles commissioned their co-laborers and successors to adhere to this method of oral instruction. (Vide I Tim. iv, 13; vi, 20) "The things which thou hast heard of me by many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men who shall be fit to teach others also." (II Tim. ii, 2). The Christian Apologists and Fathers of the second century speak in the same strain. Clement of Rome, Irenaeus, Tertullian, et al., tell us of the authoritative weight of tradition as understood in the proper way. Take for instance the words of St. Clement: "Christ was sent from God, the Apostles from Christ. . . They preached in countries and in towns, and the first fruits of their ministry, having tested them in the power of the Holy Spirit, they appointed to be overseers and ministers to all that would believe." "The Apostles made their appointments and arranged a succession, that when they had fallen asleep, other tried men should carry on their ministry." (Greek Patrology, Chap. xlii-xliv, Vol. 1, 292-298.)

Now it seems to us that the Catholic view of the spreading of God's Word has been fairly well explained. Until "Mr. Challenger" succeeds in proving that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the Rule of Faith, he can hardly expect anyone to bother much about his assertions. We may, however, beg the reader's pardon for commenting upon the following absurdities: "Romanism," says Hon. Mr. Challenger, "is really a novelty, Protestantism is founded upon eternal truth." Why, even profane history will tell you that the Roman Catholic Church was old and hoary before what is called Protestantism was dreamed of. The oldest sect among Protestants is not more than four hundred years old, while the Catholic Church can trace her lineage back to the Apostles themselves. The words are misplaced. Protestantism would be placed in the first clause, Romanism (pardon the objectionable expression) in the second. The Church Calendar, a Protestant Episcopal organ published in New York City, while objecting to the official title of its Church and regarding the same as a misnomer, has this to say of up-to-date Protestantism: "Protestant carries with it the inherent stigma of weakness, and the implied shame of defeat. And now this name relegates the Church in this land to bad company, since it has come to be the common denominator of all, be they who they may or what they may, that does not own obedience to the Pope of Rome, or follow the law of Moses. A heterogeneous crowd it is, of all shades of opinion, of all varieties of faith, or of no faith, respectable in morals, or lax, or distinctly immoral." (P. 78 Church Calendar, Art. of Prot. Bishop of Springfield.) The above statement must be regarded by every sincere minded person as true to the accepted position of Protestantism nowadays. Where, we ask in the name of truth, is the foundation upon Eternal Truth? Which then of the two—Roman Catholicism or Protestantism—is really a novelty—the former, that grand old historic institution, built upon Peter, the Rock, or the latter, the Kingdom divided against itself three hundred times?

Again, "Mr. Challenger" is altogether too safe offering to pay \$50,000 to any Roman Catholic who shall produce a text to prove St. Peter had no wife. Roman Catholics do not claim that St. Peter was unmarried, in fact, the second nocturne lesson of the breviary for the feast of St. John before the Latin Gate, May 6 (which I have recently perused) mentions very positively that St. Peter had a wife. And we know from the sacred text itself that Peter's mother in law was sick with fever and was miraculously healed by the Saviour. Beside

this, there is in the so called "Challenge" a frightful jumbling and misrepresentation of Catholic doctrine and Catholic discipline, for example, the reference to "more meditators than one," "that the Virgin Mary can save us," "that priests ought not to marry," "that the wine at the Lord's table ought only be taken by the priests." The writer of this deceitful and misleading "challenge" should first seek correct information about Catholic belief before he attempts to formulate propositions so utterly false and unfair to the Church which he antagonizes. It is not difficult to read between the lines of this infamous paper and therein discover, not good faith and sincerity, but the triple-headed monster of spite, malice and jugglery with which he may hope in vain to destroy one or tittle of our cherished faith. Last, however, our adversary think that we are opposing him with words and not actions—the latter are far more powerful—we take occasion to add the following: This wonderful defender of Protestantism and slander of the Catholic Church, who offers financial rewards, but whose name and address are prudently concealed, attempts to mislead the unwary by giving the dates of decrees of various councils concerning twenty-two Catholic doctrines and practices, with the inference that in such years these doctrines were first taught by the Church. Now the International Catholic Truth Society, Arbuckle Building, Brooklyn, New York City, humbly offers \$500.00 to anyone who will place a similar amount in the hands of any representative gentleman of this city, the loser's money to go to public charity, such amount to be paid by us, if we are unable to prove that each and every one of the twenty-two doctrines were taught by the Church centuries before the date assigned by the unknown challenger.

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY, per JOHN J. MAHON.

CONVERTS IN IRELAND

It seems as if the day was not far distant when Ireland will be completely Catholic from end to end. In Ulster the Church is at present making great headway. A book entitled "Some Notable Conversions in the County of Wexford" has just appeared. The author, Esther Kirk, tells in a simple, unaffected way the story of his conversion to the Catholic faith. It is, we believe, generally thought that the number of Protestants who are received into the Church in Ireland is very small. But this supposition is scarcely correct. Ireland supplies quite a considerable number of converts, and it would no doubt be still larger if the efforts made to win non-Catholics were more systematic. Father Kirk, who was a Protestant curate at Gorey in the county Wexford, seems from the earliest days of his ministry to have been drawn towards the Catholic Church. Others in the same county were similarly inclined about the same time, and in his pages he gives us glimpses of the progress they made towards religious truth.

Closely associated with his own conversion in a very special way was that of Mr. and Mrs. Ram and their family. Mr. Ram was the heir of Ramsfort, in county Wexford, a descendant of the first Protestant Bishop of Ferns. A legend dating from early times ran to the effect that the first owner of the property who returned to the Catholic faith would lose all his Irish possessions, and the legend has been fulfilled to the letter, the temporal loss being more than compensated for by the spiritual gain. When Father Kirk first visited the district as a Catholic priest, and he and Mr. Ram drove to the local Catholic church, the people in showing their joy would do with nothing less than the strains of a brass band. Their intention was, no doubt, good, but they gave the newly-ordained priest, who had no desire to play the hero, a very bad quarter of an hour.

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