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REV. DR. CAHILL, THE RAMBLER AND THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BEVERLEY.

ADDRESS PRESENTED TO DR. CAHILL.

To the Very Reverend D. W. Cahill, D.D.  
Leeds, Feb. 27th, 1854.

We, the undersigned members of the Clergy of the diocese of Beverley, hasten to avail ourselves of the opportunity which your second visit to this neighborhood affords us of testifying our regard for your person, our admiration of your distinguished attainments, and our gratitude for the services you have rendered to religion.

That you have met with opposition in your meritorious career, is not surprising; that the enemies of the Faith should have selected you as the object of their frequent attacks is but a compliment to your eminent position; but that men calling themselves the children of the Church should have stood forth to misrepresent your arguments, to deny your rights, to be considered as an exponent of Catholic faith, to stigmatise you as a retailer of "much that is pernicious or untrue," is one of those acts which justify calls for our indignation. However sincere and well-intentioned we may, in charity, believe its authors to be, we only regard such a proceeding as the result of extravagant egotism in them, of which we have had to lament unfortunately too many instances.—We have only to turn over a page or two from that in which we have read the unchristian attack on yourself, and we find our venerated Bishops and Clergy portrayed as the abettors of "gross irreverence," and "enormity of mockery" in the services of the Church, and much more in a similar strain.

For yourself, it can hardly be matter of regret to have been associated with the most dignified that Catholic England can boast in such unmeasured and unchristian misrepresentation, while it gives us an occasion of which we gladly avail ourselves of assuring you once more of our gratitude for your past labors, and of our heartfelt wishes and prayers that you may be long spared to continue your untiring exertions in the cause of God and His holy Church.

(Here follow the signatures.)

REPLY.

Very Rev. and Rev. Gentlemen—The regard, the affection, and the kind condescension which breathe through every line of your most valued address, render it impossible for me to make a suitable reply in any form of words at my command. This public document is, under the existing circumstances, a most necessary rebuke to persons who, from being treated with courtesy, and perhaps flattered, seem to have lost sight of all prudence by putting forth their crude knowledge without sense, their blind zeal without charity, and their offensive criticism without learning. They appear to have conceived the possibility of converting their old friends by praising Protestantism and by abusing Catholicity; they seem to think that they can reduce their present position to a happy mean between our Gospel and the Book of Common Prayer, and it would strike any penetrating observer that these gentlemen have joined us more because they try to escape from the contradictions of Protestantism, than to embrace the convictions of Catholicity. This liberal compromise will never succeed; "no one can serve two masters."

But it is fortunate they have been checked in this early stage of their tractarianism; no one could volunteer to give the public correction, which they compelled me, most reluctantly, to administer; and if proofs were wanted to show the untamed tone of their minds, it can be found in every sentence they write in reference to me, where, in place of making an apology for their gross mis-statements, they are still struggling to defend their foolish conduct in the face of the indignant public.

Gentlemen, just read that sentence in their article where they say that the word "transubstantiation" was created by Catholic theology to express "the annihilation of one substance, and the substitution of another." Here they identify the questionable opinions of some few theologians with the unquestionable dogmas of faith, and if they read Bellarmine and St. Thomas, instead of Vasquez and Perrone, they would pause before they exposed themselves to the just criticism of the scholars of the Church.

Again, hear them while they tell the Faithful, in page 173, that the "accidents in the Eucharist (the only portions of matter which, as far as we know, are cognisable by the senses) remain unaltered." Here we are informed, firstly, that our sensations are "portions of matter;" and secondly, that although the Council of Trent declares that there is a "total conversion of the substance of bread," yet here it is stated that "portions of matter" remain unaltered after the consecration. Read the absurd wording of these sentences.

I might regret having taken so much notice of

these imprudent persons if I had not received this address; but now I am pleased that any circumstance has occurred which has placed before me a precious document which makes my heart so happy, and which I shall bind up with my choicest and warmest feelings as long as I live.—I am Very Rev. and Rev gentlemen, your for ever attached friend,  
D. W. CAHILL, D.D.

P. S.—The third letter, which I promised on next Saturday, I shall reserve, and I shall, if necessary, publish it on some future occasion.

We trust that we have now had the last of this very painful controversy, and that the voice of authority may be heard saying to all the belligerents, "*Pax Vobiscum.*"

## A VISIT TO THE CATACOMBS.

(From the N. Y. Freeman.)

The Catholic traveller, whom the Faith leads to Rome, cannot comprehend the full significance of the holy city, if he contents himself with an inspection of the Pagan ruins, and the magnificent churches of the centre of Christendom. Between the monuments of vanquished error and those of triumphant Faith, there exists so strong a contrast—these have been built for vice, and those for virtue—that the conversion of Rome would be incomprehensible, were it not that the solution of the problem is discoverable in the subterranean city. But when we search the depths of the catacombs; when we reflect that sixty of these cemeteries surround the seven-hilled city of Romulus, with their mysterious circumvallation; when we remember that, for the first four centuries, the Christians came hither to draw from the sepulchres of the martyrs a courage which should enable them also to die for the Faith, then we can understand how the victim's heroism triumphed over the executioner's rage, how the cross, long hidden below the surface of the earth, blazed glorious at last, on the sacred banner of Constantine.

The catacombs were the first churches, and the first tombs of the Christians; they exhibit by their paintings, their inscriptions, their altars, their monuments exhaustless treasures of proofs attesting the antiquity of our ceremonies, our dogmas and our sacraments; they form the links of a chain of tradition which unites our own days with the days of the Apostles. They form a book, august and solemn, wherein the finger of God hath written, in ineffaceable characters, the divinity of His Church; and we firmly believe that no honest man could, in good faith, study the catacombs without becoming a Catholic.

But just as the Bible presents numerous obscurities, of which even genius cannot fathom the meaning without the aid of an authority emanating from on high, so do the catacombs exhibit a problem resolvable only by science and theology. In our days two men in particular have consecrated their labors to a study of these venerable excavations; the one a Jesuit, Rev. Father Marchi, the learned conservator of the Musée Kircher, at the Roman College; the other, the Chevalier de Rossi, Father Marchi's most eminent scholar, who is now able to discuss and complete the ideas of his illustrious master.

The Sovereign Pontiff has assigned to each of these gentlemen a certain number of catacombs; no search can be made without their orders; no object is extracted until they have perfectly studied its characteristics, and their assiduous vigilance will henceforward preserve these subterranean labyrinths from the dilapidations of idle curiosity and sacrilegious violence. During the summer the catacombs remain closed on account of their unhealthfulness; but every winter excursions are organised and guided by the Chevalier de Rossi himself. The stranger in Rome eagerly seeks admission into the exploring party, and we were so fortunate as to receive an invitation from the Chevalier to accompany him on his visit to the catacomb of St. Calixtus. The presence of M. de Rossi redoubles the value of the pilgrimage, and the visit becomes a course of sacred archaeology.

We met at St. Joseph's Church, which stands at the foot of the Capitol, over the Mamertine prison where Jugurtha perished of cold and hunger, and out of which St. Peter and St. Paul were led on the same day to martyrdom. There were twelve of us in all; a French prelate, an Armenian priest, officers, ladies, &c., but all were Catholics, and therefore disposed to show all reverence to the tombs of our ancestors in the faith. After praying by the brink of the fountain which the Apostle caused to spring in his dungeon for the baptism of his gaoler, we got into our carriages and rode towards the country, passing through the ancient form. We passed beneath the arches of Titus and of Constantine, the one commemorating Jerusalem's Fall, the other Christianity's Triumph. In contemplating the gigantic proportions of the Coliseum, we thought how it had been the scene of their martyrdom whose tombs we were about to visit. Outside the city walls, we still ad-

vanced a few miles into the country, until we reached the little Church of *Domine quo Vadis*, so called in memory of a tradition of the first centuries, which says, that Peter, flying from Rome, met on this spot the Lord bearing his Cross, and said "*Domine quo Vadis?*"—Lord, whither goest Thou?" And that the Holy One replied: "*Venio iterum crucifigi*—I come to be crucified anew." The Apostle understood, turned back, and, Vicar of Christ as he was, soon suffered crucifixion.

A little further on, in the middle of a vineyard, is a pit which is the entrance to the catacomb, and there, after lighting our candles, we descended almost perpendicular steps cut in the soil. At a depth of about forty feet, open horizontal galleries running in all directions and occasionally meeting to separate anew. The galleries are very narrow and permit only a single person to pass at a time; indeed it is impossible to advance without continually brushing against the walls on either side. The walls are pierced with niches of six feet in length by two in depth, arranged horizontally for the reception of bodies. They form thus double or triple tiers of sepulchres in general, but sometimes seven or eight tiers, or even twelve are found in one single gallery. The Abbé Gerbert likens them to the divisions of a library where Death has ranged his works. When a corpse had been placed in one of these *loculi*, it was closed with brick, stones, or a slab of marble. Many of these niches are open and empty; others preserve intact the precious deposit committed to their keeping, and others again exhibit the white bones that fill them. In any other place, this thick gloom, this silence, these blanched skeletons would cause a feeling of involuntary terror. But here, we feel that we breathe amid the relics of the Saints, and while we are softened we are re-assured. Furthermore we recognize without horror the nothingness of human life, and this thought inspired the Abbé Gerbert, now Bishop of Perpignan, to write one of the most beautiful pages existing in the French language, by the transcription of which we are sure to win the thanks of our readers.

"The cemeteries which conceal what passes in the sepulchre; the Egyptian Necropoli, which hide by their embalment the inevitable decomposition of human matter; the Sicilian grottos which have the property of preserving the body; the modern subterranea of Paris, where walls of human bones exhibit in mass what each man has seen in detail, do not, like the catacombs, permit us to observe the work, I do not say of Death, but of what comes after death.—In going through there, we pass in review the phases of destruction, as in a botanic garden we remark the phases of vegetable development from the almost imperceptible blossom to the tall tree, full of sap and crowned with flowers. In a certain number of sepulchral niches opened at various epochs, we can follow, in some sort, step by step, the successive forms each more and more receding from vitality by which that which is now therein has reached almost to nothingness. Look at this skeleton, if it has been preserved through so many centuries, it is probably because the earth in which it was laid is not dry. Humidity which destroys so many other forms of matter, has given these bones a longer power of resistance by covering them with something which has lent them more consistency than they possessed as members of a living body. Yet even this consistency is part of the progress of destruction; these human bones are turned into stone. Further on, yonder tomb has been the scene of a strife between the power that petrifies and the power that reduces to dust. The first fails, the second wins, but slowly. The combat that in you and me goes on between life and death, will be ended long before that struggle between two kinds of death shall cease. In the neighboring sepulchre nothing of that which once formed a human body now exists, save where the semblance of a head is visible, covered by a white veil of dust, like the folds of the burial clothes. Look, lastly, into that other niche. There, nothing is left but simplest dust, the very color of which is no longer classifiable, owing to a visible tinge of redness. There you see the work of destruction has been thoroughly accomplished. Not yet. Look well and you can yet recognise in that dust the outlines of a human form. That little heap which touches one extremity of the niche was once a human head; those other smaller heaps lying down lower, one at the right, the other at the left, have been the shoulders; those others were the knees; those tracks of dust with slight irregularities, were once the longer limbs. This mere last outline of a man, this form so vague, so effaced, scarce visible in its almost unpalpable dust, volatile, nearly transparent, pale grey in color, gives us the best idea of what the ancients called a shade. If you put your head inside of this sepulchre in order to see the better, you must be careful you may not move, nor speak, nor scarcely breathe. That form is frailer than the wing of the

butterfly; more ready to vanish than the drops of dew which hang from the grass blade. The agitation of the air which a motion of your hand would produce, a breath, a sound would be powerful agents for the instant annihilation of that which seventeen centuries have not been able to destroy. Behold, you have breathed! The form is gone. Such is the earthly history of man."

As you proceed, the galleries become larger, and form large chambers capable of containing a hundred persons. In the centre of the ceiling is a hole communicating with the surface, and admitting a little light and air. The rays cast into this darkness served as a line of separation for the sexes, who sat apart. During three centuries of persecution these subterranean halls were the only churches of the Christians, the only palaces of the early Popes. There came the faithful to be prepared for martyrdom, by the fervent exhortations of their pastors and the reception of the sacraments.

At the end of these halls rises the stone altar covering the tomb of a saint. The walls are adorned with fresco paintings, frequently well preserved; many of them being pictures of saints with their hands lifted in prayer, to show forth the doctrine of the Church, that the saints pray God for the mortals who invoke them. Around these figures are such legends as these: "Blessed Peter, pray for us," "Blessed John, intercede for us." The blessed Virgin, holding the infant Redeemer, is frequently represented upon the altars amid praying figures.—And these monuments remount uncontestedly to the very first ages of Christianity, and yet cannot convince a Protestant that the Catholic's prayers to the saints are divinely inspired. Stone seats, ranged round the altar, served for the priests, or for the Sovereign Pontiff; others in more retired spots appear to be designed for confessionals.

Not less than six millions of bodies are supposed to have found their final resting place in these catacombs; and yet out of the sixty which exist, only twenty have been explored. So that from age to age new discoveries will be made to edify the faith, interest the science, and strengthen the arguments of Theologians on the conformity of our belief with that of the Christians converted by the Apostles. In order to shake the reasoning supported by these venerable monuments, Protestants unanimously affirm that the catacombs were quarries, worked by the Romans before the coming of Christ. They also declare that these subterranean served as places of inhumation for the pagans, in order to cast doubt upon the authenticity of the relics taken hence. But Father Marchi has proved in his *Monuments de Rome Chrétienne des cinq premiers Siècles*, that the faithful were really the architects of these prodigious excavations as well as the only persons who received sepulture in them. The first proposition is indubitably proved by a simple examination of the localities. The quarries of the ancient Romans present vast galleries of easy access to cars or beasts of burden; but the galleries of the catacombs are so narrow that two persons cannot walk abreast. It is evident that they were not excavated for the quarrying purposes, for the galleries, deeply sunk and ramifying, are dug one under the other, to the number of four or five, and never presenting a corridor of more than two or three feet wide. All follow a uniform horizontal plan, without regard to the veins of stone which they meet with, and which would of course be followed if stone were the object of the excavations. In quarries, also, the materials nearest the surface are first extracted, and nothing is left save the slender pillars for the support of the superincumbent soil. But the catacombs suggest that their makers had, as principal idea, the wish to escape observation, without the slightest regard to the material which they were piercing. Furthermore, Roman quarries were only made to procure *pauzzolana*, a sort of sand, or the volcanic stone, of which all the buildings are constructed, while the Christian catacombs are all dug in the granular tufa which retains its hardness only beneath the soil, and crumbles on being exposed to air and light, so as to be utterly useless for building purposes. Why, then, should the Pagans have taken such needless pains to obtain a useless material?

As to the question whether these catacombs were used as places of Pagan sepulture, it is to be remarked that of the thousands of tombs which have been examined in the last three centuries, not one exhibits a characteristic or a date anterior to Christianity; and it is well known that the Christians did make excavations with the sole and express motive of avoiding sepulture among the Pagans. Many tombs are without inscriptions, but a great number have characters and emblems which have been carefully copied, and which are singularly and purely Christian.

\* *Esquisse de Rome Chrétienne*, par l'Abbé Ph. Gerbert, Vol. I., page 173.