

The Reasonableness of the Practices of the Catholic Church.

BY REV. J. J. BURKE.

Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

II. "And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke, and gave to His disciples, and said: 'Take ye and eat, This is My body.' (St. Matt. xxvi. 26.)"

Perhaps no mystery of revelation has been so universally attacked as the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

By the Real Presence is meant that Jesus Christ is really and truly, body and blood, soul and divinity, present in the Blessed Sacrament, under the form and appearances of bread and wine.

This teaching of the Church is in perfect agreement with Scripture, tradition and reason.

If the reader will take up his Bible and read carefully the 6th chapter of the Gospel according to St. John; the 26th chapter, 26th, 27th and 28th verses of St. Matthew; the 14th chapter, 22nd verse of St. Mark; the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, 10th chapter, 16th verse, as well as other portions of the New Testament, he will certainly see that the Catholic teaching and practice concerning the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament are founded on Scripture. In this 6th chapter of St. John we learn that before instituting the Blessed Sacrament our Saviour wished to announce or promise it to His disciples in order to prepare them for it. He first gave them a figure of the Blessed Sacrament in the multiplication of the five loaves of bread by which He fed five thousand persons. After this miracle He told them that He would give them bread superior to that which they had eaten, and that this bread was His own flesh and blood. "The bread that I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world." It is almost impossible to understand these words of our Lord in any other than a literal sense. He was so understood by those who heard Him. "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" they said, and many withdrew from Him. It is but reasonable to believe that He did not wish to be understood in a literal sense. He would have told His hearers so, rather than have them leave Him.

This promise of a doctrine so difficult to understand was fulfilled at the Last Supper.

Then Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke, and gave to His disciples, and said: "Take ye and eat, This is My body." And taking the chalice He gave thanks; and gave to them, saying: "Drink ye all of this. For this is My blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins."

"Do this for a commemoration of Me."

These are substantially the words of Sts. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and of the Apostle Paul.

In the 10th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul says: "The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?"

Any one of these texts abundantly proves the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence, and shows the reasonableness of the Catholic practice regarding the Blessed Sacrament. Reflect upon them. Reflect especially upon the words of Christ, "This is My body." Think what an insult it is to the divinity and veracity of Christ to doubt His word, because you cannot understand how what appears to be bread is in reality His own body and blood.

If you remember that Jesus Christ is God—that He had the power to make this change, that He could confer this power on others, as the apostles and their successors, that He did so when He said: "Do this in commemoration of Me," and that this change at the present time as at the time of the apostles is made by His Almighty power—you will have no difficulty in believing it.

The belief and practice of the Catholic Church of today regarding the Blessed Sacrament is the same as it was in every age since the time of Christ. The history of every century tells us this. The Fathers, doctors, and Church writers of every age say the same. If it were not so, some one ought to be able to find the time when the doctrine was invented, and the person who invented it. But, since no one has been able to find the inventor of this doctrine and practice, the time or place of the invention, we rightly conclude that they came down to us from the time of Christ, and had Christ for an author. (Cecilius, in the eleventh century, was the first who denied this doctrine.) If, then, Christ is the author, is not the Catholic practice reasonable?

But I don't understand the Catholic doctrine regarding the Blessed Sacrament, some one may say; therefore it is contrary to reason. Dear reader, did the consummate puerility, silliness, foolishness of such an objection ever present itself to you? Do you understand the Blessed Trinity? And is it contrary to reason? No. Although above reason, it is not against it. Do you understand how Jesus Christ is both God and man? Do you understand it would no longer be a mystery. For a mystery is something above human intelligence. It is something incomprehensible to us, for it pertains to the divine intelligence. And as well might you attempt to pour the mighty ocean into a small hole on the shore, as attempt to hold with your limited

capacity the illimitable ocean of divinity. The proper office of reason is to examine the evidences of revelation, and see if God has spoken. But it constitutes no part of its office to dispute the word of God. That God has spoken is evident from the fulfillment of many prophecies and the authority of many miracles. That these prophecies have been fulfilled, and these miracles performed, is as certain as any historical fact.

Reason teaches us this. It teaches us, too, that no one but God (or by the power of God) can prophesy; no one but God can derogate from the order of nature, by the performance of a miracle. Reason teaches us, then, that God has spoken. When we know God speaks, genuine reason will dictate that we humbly believe His holy word. Thus will true reason ever act. And when God says, "This is My body," it will not hesitate to believe.

We all believe that at the baptism of our Saviour by St. John Baptist, the Holy Ghost appeared in the form of a dove. Now, is it not as reasonable for Jesus Christ, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, to appear in the form of bread as it was for the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Trinity, to appear in the form of a dove? We must therefore admit that the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is reasonable; that it has been believed by the Christian Church of every age from the time of Christ until the present time; and that it is taught by Sts. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and by St. Paul in clear and unmistakable terms.

Now, dear reader, since Jesus Christ is really present, is not the Catholic practice regarding the Blessed Sacrament reasonable? Should we not adore Him as really present in the Blessed Sacrament? Should we not frequently receive Him with pure and contrite hearts? Should we not, when we enter the church, genuflect, bend the knee in His honor? Should we not show Him every mark of respect and devotion? Can we do too much in His honor? Let us, then, adore our Lord and our God, for we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Let us return love for love to the great King of suffering. Who was born for love of us, Who died for love of us, and Who, for love of us, remains ever with us in the Blessed Sacrament. Let us ask that our faith and love may persevere to the end; that loving and adoring Him here in the Blessed Sacrament of His love, we may be united with Him forever hereafter.

TO BE CONTINUED.

WONDERFUL TESTIMONY.

Protestant Witnesses of the Faith—Admission of these Writers for the Church.

Quite a respectable number of the most eminent Protestant preachers, writers, historians, etc., thus speak of the Catholic Church:

1. I must accept the Church of Rome for a true Church. There is in the Church of Rome the profession of all the faith necessary for salvation.—*Thorndike Epist.*

2. It is acknowledged on all hands that the Church of Rome was Apostolic and pure and, even at the present day, it has persevered in all the fundamental doctrines of the true and Christian faith. And the sacraments ordained by the Gospel are here administered by a priesthood which derives its appointment by an uninterrupted succession from the Apostles, and it derives its authority from our great Master.—*Davis.*

3. The Church government maintained by the Church of Rome has been traced without a single break in the chain up to the immediate succession of the Apostles.—*Brit. Crit.*

4. If that Church is to be called schismatic because others would not stay in it, then to change is to be constant, and to run away is to stand still.—*Cressy.*

5. They who separate from the Church of Rome as being idolatrous are thereby schismatics before God.

6. After all, we have no other ground for this conceit (calling Roman Catholics idolaters) than the crude and rash assertions of some popular divines who have no other measures of truth or zeal except hatred.—*Bishop Parker, Reasons for Ardy.*

7. The writings of the most ancient Fathers of the Church are the authentic testimonies of the faith of the Christian world during the first ages. Now, this faith is still that of the Catholic Church. And if men had retained any shadow of respect for what Christ and His Apostles taught, and which they cannot without inconsistency refuse them, it is certain that all the advantage is on the side of this Church.—*Storke.*

8. That the Church of Rome hath apostatized from the true faith, no man of our profession thinketh any such thing.—*Field.*

9. The foundations of faith stand secure among the Roman Catholics.—*Taylor.*

10. I do freely profess that I find no position necessary for salvation prohibited; none destructive of salvation enjoined to be believed by the Church of Rome.—*Thorndike.*

11. The Church of Rome has the foundation of true faith, and the advantage of discipline modelled after the apostolic practice. For which reasons I cannot agree with those who in an intemperate zeal have, as uncharitably as absurdly, stated that the Church of Rome is an anti-Christian power.—*Wise.*

12. The Church of Rome is acknowledged by the Church of England to be a true and Apostolic Church.

13. The Catholic Church was

founded by the Apostles, with the promise that "the gates of hell should not prevail against it." It has continued on with honorable line of successors of St. Peter, tyrants, traitors, pagans and heretics in vain wrestling and raging. All the General Councils have approved and honored it; God hath miraculously blessed it.

In all other opposite Churches there are found inward discussions, contrariety, and change of opinions. In the Catholic Church is an undivided unity and the most heavenly order.—*Sir E. Sandy's Relat. of W. Relig.*

14. How am I struck with admiration when I consider this venerable Roman Church, its vast extent, its magnificence, stability, discipline, the impotence of its enemies, notwithstanding all their sophistical invectives and calumnies, the dignity, virtues and talents of its apologists, the dishonesty of its assailants, and their variation on points of doctrine.—*Fitzwilliam's Letters of Attilius.*

15. You certainly existed before we did, since your origin is coeval with the Apostles. If the Irenaeus, the Gregories the Athanasii, the Chrysostoms, were now again to return to the earth it would be in the Church of Rome alone that they would find that society of which once they had been the members.—*Memorial of French Ref. Church, 1750.*

"THE BEAUTIFUL NUN."

Ethan Allen's Daughter Saved from the Claws of a Monster.

Many interesting stories appear in the volume of Personal Reminiscences recently issued by Hon. L. E. Chittenden, who was Register of the Treasury under Lincoln. The following story of "The Beautiful American Nun" is told to the author by the Rev. Louis de Goessbriand, Bishop of Vermont. In the Bishop's story the saving of Gen. Ethan Allen's daughter from the monster of the water is referred to as "the only accepted and well-authenticated miracle ever wrought within the limits of Vermont."

The Bishop's story is reported as follows:

After the war of the Revolution, as you know, Gen. Ethan Allen came to reside on the Winooski interval in this town, where he lived at the time of his death. His dwelling was a farm-house on an unfrequented road, and he had no near neighbors. One spring morning, when his daughter Fanny, aged nine years, was gathering wild flowers on the river's bank, she was startled by the sight of a monster which was rushing through the water, apparently to devour her. Stricken with fear, she was unable to move and utterly helpless. As the savage beast was about to tear her with his ferocious claws she heard a kind and gentle voice saying, "Have no fear, my daughter, the monster has no power over you." Trustfully raising her eyes, she saw standing by her side an aged man of venerable aspect, white hair and beard, wearing a long cloak and carrying a long staff in his hand. His words reassured the frightened maid; her fears departed, and she started for her home. There she related her fearful adventure and described the appearance of her deliverer. Her father and mother immediately went in search of him, but he was neither to be found nor heard of. No one had seen him on the road where he must have passed. Her parents gave up the search, believing that their daughter was the victim of her own imagination, and that no such person existed as she believed she had seen. The incident passed from their minds and was for the time forgotten.

The Bishop's account then proceeds with the pretty love story of Fanny Allen, who grew into a beautiful woman and became engaged to the son of a wealthy Boston merchant. He loved Fanny Allen with all the devotion of a brilliant mind and a pure heart. She gave him in return the treasure of her first love. The parents of both approved of the union, and he was always a welcome visitor to the home of his beloved. The love and society of her promised bride were completely satisfying to Fanny Allen. She envied no one and wanted nothing more. The year which closed on her eighteenth birthday was a year of contentment and unalloyed happiness.

Miss Allen had received an excellent English education, but at this time she conceived "an irresistible desire" to acquire the French language. This wish was opposed by her mother and her affianced.

As further resistance promised to imperil the health and possibly the life of his adopted daughter, her step-father yielded, and her mother accompanied her to the city of Montreal in search of a school in which the daughter might be taught the French language. Then as now the schools in the convents were a deservedly high reputation and were successively visited by the American strangers. Their final visit to the convents was the celebrated "sterchord" known as the Convent "Hotel Dieu." They entered its chapel, walked up one of the aisles until they stood before a large painting near the altar. To the mother's amazement, the daughter suddenly fell upon her knees, bowed her head in prayerful adoration, and pointing to a figure in the painting, exclaimed: "There is the man who saved me from the monster!" It was the figure of St. Joseph, the husband of the Blessed Virgin, in a large printing of the Holy Family.

Believing she had been directed hither by a divine influence, Miss Allen insisted upon becoming a scholar at the convent, and her

mother left her in charge of the sisterhood and returned to her Vermont home.

At the convent a new life began for Miss Allen. The unselfish piety of the Sisters powerfully impressed her, and she determined to enter the sisterhood as soon as her season of probation was ended.

Her mother, her friends, her lover, tried to dissuade her. In the hope of diverting her mind she was taken from the convent into the most fashionable circles of city life, where her brilliancy and beauty attracted universal admiration. Her affianced lover made to her the most tender appeals. If she longed to become a minister of charity, like the good Sisters, his fortune was hers. All he asked was that he might work beside her and sustain her strength.

But Fanny Allen was inflexible. She had the energy, decision and firmness of her father, controlled by the gentleness of a trustful nature. Her first love did not grow cold. Her lover was dearer to her than ever. It was because she loved him so well that she was constrained to obey the call of One through whom she hoped to secure his eternal welfare.

In due time Miss Allen, confident of the genuineness of her conversion to the Catholic faith, returned to the convent to prepare for her final withdrawal from the world. Her life at the convent "Hotel Dieu" was an exceedingly happy one. She became known far and wide, and every visitor to Montreal was drawn to pay a visit to the "Beautiful American Nun." After assuming the religious habit she lived eleven years, and came to the end of her beautiful life at the age of thirty-five years. These eleven years witnessed so many conversions of her relatives and acquaintances to the Catholic faith as to establish the miraculous character of her own experience. The physician who attended her last hours, a Protestant, was so touched by her faith that when at the last moment her confessor exclaimed: "Come to my assistance, all ye saints of God," he fell upon his knees and made a solemn promise, which was executed by leaving his profession, of joining the Church, and entering a religious community.

Her intended husband sold what he had and gave it to the poor, and himself to the service of the Church. The Rev. Mr. Barber, the Episcopal minister who baptised Miss Allen, became a Catholic at the age of sixty-two, and his son and grandson became Jesuit priests and missionaries to the Indians.

Her relatives, and those who knew her well, almost without exception, followed her example; two of them, a Protestant clergyman and his wife, obtained a Papal decree permitting them to separate, in order that the husband might become a priest and his wife a nun. This lady afterwards was the Superior of a convent in a Southern city.

The example set by Fanny Allen has not yet lost its power, for many conversions from Protestantism of her posterity continue to occur.

The Social Bond.

Whilst the various sects are unceasing in their endeavors to gain adherents to their peculiar creeds, Catholics often display an apathy in such a work. By the free distribution of books and tracts, by social gatherings in which members of the Churches meet and greet the strangers, or to encourage the faltering ones, or to bring back those who are straying away, Catholic societies of men and women could imitate their non-Catholic neighbors in the cause of religion.

We do not advocate the adjunction of kitchen and dining room to every church, in order to reach the soul by way of the stomach, but we would plead in general for more of the social amenities of life by which the beautiful charity of Catholic faith may be practised to the edification of all who naturally look for the results of religious training in even the common occurrence of every-day life.

The Catholic Church glories in possessing the properties that attract all souls without reference to social conditions, and class distinctions are entirely ignored by her. Her doctrines make her the popular teacher of all men who seek "the way, the truth, and the life."

Catholics, therefore, should show forth the life of faith, they are expected to live, and thus testify to the world "how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity."—*Catholic Canadian.*

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THE SECRECY OF THE CONFESSORIAL.

St. John Nepomucene, Martyr.

The story of St. John Nepomucene, may be briefly told. He lived in Bohemia, more than five hundred years ago; he was the confessor of the empress. The emperor, who was suspicious of his wife, commanded St. John to tell him what the empress confessed; St. John refused, and the emperor had him tortured and finally flung over the bridge into the river.

Persons who refuse to believe in the Catholic Church and pretend that she is merely a human institution, now and then are confronted by certain hard facts which cannot be explained away, and which show as plainly as possible that she is divinely aided and guarded: that the Spirit of God Himself watches over her. One of these facts is the secrecy of the confessional. St. John Nepomucene is not the only priest who has died sooner than reveal the confessions of his penitents. "There is a little quiet graveyard within sound of the swift Shannon, where it rushes on to Limerick, and within the ruined walls of the small ancient church, round which dank with nettles and moss, a plain slab of stone. Clear away the nettles, kneel down and press your lips to that stone: for it shuts in the grave of an aged and venerable martyr for the seal of confession. There lies an old priest who was so cruelly scourged by martial lawlessness during the Irish rebellion to make him reveal something about the insurrection, supposed to have been revealed to him in confession, that he died from the infliction, and sank into a martyr's grave."

Who can count or imagine the number of confessions that have been heard by Catholic priests since the foundation of the Church! And yet in all those thousands of years, in all the chances and changes of human affairs, it has never been known that any priest has revealed even one single, smallest, slightest thing made known to him in the confessional. The Church, it is true, has provided proper penalties for any priest who should be guilty of breaking the seal; but the reason that no priest has ever yet broken the law. Priests have some times fallen away, become apostates and lost and wicked men, but even while abusing and ridiculing the confessional not one of them has ever revealed any of its secrets. Not a syllable has escaped their lips about the slightest venial sin that has ever been told them. Priests on their sick-beds have been delicious and have raved in fever, but never even unconsciously have they broken the seal. What power restrains the guilty men who are slandering the Church and would be glad to break down and destroy this great bulwark and security for the penitent sinner? and what hand guards and seals the lips of the fever-stricken sufferer and guides his wandering mind away from the sacred and inviolable secrets? No power but that of heaven itself could work this perpetual and constant miracle. Even the bitterest enemies of the Church dare not say that the secrets of the confessional are ever made known. They know well that they could never prove it. They may explain the fact or even deny it, as they will. We know that "this is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes."

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