

# THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.  
CCOXXII.

The Republican correspondent styles the claim of the Roman Bishop to have been divinely called to the chief guardianship of the Faith, an "arrogant assumption."

This is a very serious charge to bring against so long a line, and the principal line, of Christian bishops. Is it warranted? I think not.

Observe, I do not mean that this place of chief dignity in Christendom has not tempted some Popes into arrogance. That would be impossible. I mean, that to believe Christ to have established such a place of chief authority in His Church is not arrogant.

Let us go outside of Christianity. After the fall of Jerusalem, the Jews came under the authority of the patriarch of Tiberias. Some of these patriarchs were haughty and some humble, but certainly there was nothing arrogant in gathering the forces of Judaism under one central control. This was a simple dictate of effectiveness. Indeed, the Emperor Hadrian is so far from reproaching the Jewish patriarch with arrogance, that he reproaches him instead with sometimes falling below his office by showing an unworthy complaisance towards heathenism.

Again, take Mohammedanism. The Sultan is Caliph I. e., Mohammed's successor, and claims absolute authority, civil and religious over every Mussulman in the world. His pretensions go immeasurably beyond any that Gregory VII. or an Innocent III. ever preferred. The Jesuit Rule says: "We should obey the Pope so far as is consistent with benevolence." Such a restriction against the Sultan would be rejected with horror by every true believer. A compassionate woman in Constantinople had saved an Armenian girl. When praise for this by some Christian friends, she said with a sigh: "Yet if the Caliph should call for her blood to-morrow, I should be damned if I did not obey."

These claims are hideous and blasphemous. Yet the Sultan personally is not arrogant in making them, for he is simply acting as a fundamental principle of his own religion. There must be a Caliph, an absolute Caliph, and he is Caliph.

Now Catholics abhor and reject the teaching that the Pope, or any superior, is to be obeyed if he should command "any manner of sin"; but there is no more "arrogance" in saying that the Christian Church is more effective for having a chief governor than in saying that Mohammedanism would be more effective for having a Caliph, or Judaism when it had a Patriarch. Is the Churchman arrogant in urging that American Episcopalians would be more influential if their bishops were gathered under a primate of jurisdiction, that is, under a national Pope?

True, Rome might well be accused of arrogance had she claimed the first place against equal pretensions of sister churches. But this she did not. The tone of calm superiority assumed by Clement, waiting about A. D. 95, does not appear to have caused the least resentment in Christians at large. When St. Ambrose, about the year 200, calls the Roman Church "the queen glorious in gold," this Easter Bishop seems wholly unaware that he can have given any matter of offense in East or West.

Richard Rothe is intensely anti-papal. Yet he declares that, as the instinct of unity developed the office of Bishop in each city, so the same instinct called for the office of Universal Primate. And if there was to be a general Primate, certainly all allowed that he was to be found at Rome.

True, there have been all grades and shades of opinion concerning the exact nature and extent of this central jurisdiction, just as there have been all manner of opinions concerning the extent of a Bishop's authority. No great function, from the Papacy to the Presidency, can be precisely defined. Some will shoot beyond the mark in describing its prerogatives; some will fall short. Yet to say that the Christian body would be more effective under a central guidance, whether collegiate or individual, does not seem to be very much amiss, whether the Pope says it or anybody else. That the Papacy, with the Cardinals, combines individual and collegiate government, hardly seems to be an additional reason for trying out against it.

When the present Archbishop of York declares that in a reunion of Christians account should be taken of the Pope's unique place in the Church, he speaks the language of a reasonable and temperate Protestantism. Should he break out as follows: "Ho, Sir, come down from that high eminence which the prevailing voice of Christendom has so long assigned you, and plead guilty to wicked arrogance in having held it," he would do small honor to himself as a Christian, or as a Protestant. We may safely leave such talk to the correspondent of the Springfield Republic.

Undoubtedly, there would have been grave ground for contention had the Roman claim to the chief governorship, though not contradicted by Christians, fallen dead on the Christian mind, had it met with passive acquiescence, but not with active welcome. In fact zealous advocates of the papal claims, in their more extended form, were found through all the West, and have not been lacking in the East, even since the rupture of 1054. Among these have been numbers of bishops, priests, and laymen, who have not had the remotest hope of reaching the Papacy, or even a cardinalate, who have been moved by no motives whatever of personal interest. To call their championship of papal claims an "arrogant assumption" would be coarse and ludicrous. They upheld these claims because they thought that they were for the unity and good of the Church, for the unity and good of the Irishman John Scotus, (not John Duns Scotus) whose writings have commonly been held heretical (perhaps because not well understood), we may probably

view St. Anselm as the great intellect of the Middle Ages, greater in original force than even St. Thomas Aquinas. He was the essence of mental and spiritual independence, while his disinterestedness very nearly reached the summit attainable by sanctified humanity. He neither expected nor received a cardinalate, and his archbishopric was forced on him by the King, and simply confirmed by the Pope. Yet Anselm was as firm an upholder of the Hildebrandine claims as Gregory VII. himself. In behalf of them he underwent years of vexation and exile. There is something else than "arrogance" in such claims supported by such a man, against his own ease and interest.

How can we talk of "arrogance" when Thomas Aquinas supports the Papacy? I do not know whether he maintained the Pope's universal episcopate, but we know that he upheld his doctrinal infallibility, and that, I believe, in a somewhat wider range than Rome has finally approved. Of course it is ridiculous to talk about "arrogance" here. Thomas was not advancing any pretensions of his own. So little was he personally concerned with the Papacy that he would not even accept a bishopric. His one ambition was the lecturer's chair, for which, at Paris, special zeal for the Papacy does not seem to have been required.

It may, indeed, be reasonably urged that the mendicant orders were zealous for the Papacy because the Papacy was zealous for them, and emancipated them almost completely from episcopal and parochial control. Yet it could not have done this had not its own supreme authority been already firmly rooted in the universal consciousness. As Dr. David Muller says, although warmly Protestant, it was not the overthrow of the great Hohenstaufen dynasty which exalted the power of the Papacy; it was the firm hold which the Papacy had on general belief that enabled it to overthrow the Hohenstaufen. We must not put the effect for the cause.

Even in the early Church the first energetic writer in behalf of the Roman claims is not the Pope, but the Bishop of Carthage. We may call St. Cyprian arrogant, if we will, in asserting his own episcopal rights, but of course there could be no arrogance in his putting the Pope above himself. True, his pro papal passages were commonly, by Protestants, been declared interpolations, but I notice that the strongly anti-Catholic Harnack, one of the greatest of living critics, declares them to be, interpolations indeed, but interpolations added by Cyprian himself.

I have referred to the relations between the mendicant orders and the Papacy. These will deserve some further consideration.

CHARLES C. STARBUCK.  
Andover, Mass.

## ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

DECEMBER 27.

Three notable feast days follow directly upon Christmas Day—the feast of St. Stephen, our Lord's first martyr among men; the feast of St. John the Evangelist, our Lord's beloved disciple; and the feast of the Holy Innocents, the baby martyrs, whose innocent existence was brutally crushed out of them by Herod's cruel soldiery, for the sake of the Lord Who loved them and gave them heaven. Now the gospel of St. John's day, contains a lesson for all of us, that curiously coincides with the thoughts awakened by all these feasts that cluster about the birthday of our Blessed Lord. It is a brief gospel. It tells us that "Peter turning about, saw that disciple whom Jesus loved following;" and he asked, in his simple-hearted, outspoken fashion: "Lord, and what shall this man do?" On Peter his Master had just been laying commandment that he was to feed the sheep and the lambs of the Church; he had just said to him: "He has been signifying by what death he should glorify God; to him he had just said: 'Follow Me.' Yet, when Peter asks concerning John: 'Lord, and what shall this man do?' our Lord's only reply is this: 'So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? follow thou Me.' To each one of us God gives a work to do for Him. The vocation is more plain in some cases than in others. The vocation to the priesthood, for instance, or to the life in some active or contemplative order, seems much more plainly a divine calling than does that of the business man, or the housekeeper, or the day laborer. Yet, when we come to consider closely these three days grouped around Christ's birthday, what man but must realize that we all have our distinct calling, our distinct work to do for God? For we see here an apostle and evangelist, dying at a great old age; a young deacon, stoned to death in his manhood's prime; and a company of infants, slaughtered "from two years old and under;" yet all these are chosen out, by the Church's wisdom, to illuminate and make glorious the Christmas octave.

Whatever our employment or our lot in life, here is the one thing requisite—to follow Christ. That following, as we know, does not mean to follow Him in the carpenter's trade, or in the three years of His public ministry, or up Calvary's height bearing a wooden cross upon our shrinking shoulders; it does not mean that we are to seek to be nailed to a cross, or to be laid in the far-off garden tomb where He was buried. No, it means that we are to follow Him in His humility. His patience, His ardent zeal and love, and in His constant obedience to God's holy will. Such is the tender mercy of the Master. Who crowns with unfading diadems even the little children of two years old and under, who have been redeemed in the baptism of water or that mysterious baptism of blood or of desire. To-day we stand at the beginning of another year, and a divine voice says to each of us: "Follow thou Me." What the year will bring we can not tell, except that we can tell this—He will certainly give us grace

to follow Him. That is the one thing necessary; and, at the end of the long path, is an endless heaven.

## FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Sunday Within the Octave of Christmas.

CHRISTMAS JOY.

Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy. (Luke II, 10.)

There is hardly any one, my brethren, who lives where this feast of Christmas is kept who does not feel a special joy in it. Why do we say that "Christmas comes but once a year," if not because we feel that there is nothing else that can take its place? We look forward to it months beforehand; when it comes, we keep it as long as we can and let it go with regret. Why is it that it has such a warm place in our hearts?

Is it merely that it is by common consent a great holiday; that it is a breathing-place in the bustle and hurry of life, a time for meeting our friends, for giving and receiving tokens of affection and regard, a time of feasting and making merry? This has something to do with it, but it is not all. For if this were all it would be possible to make by law a holiday like this, which no one has ever succeeded in doing. The early settlers of this country, in a mistaken zeal against church festivals, endeavored to make a substitute for Christmas; but the failure of their attempt has driven their descendants back to the observance of this feast, though not to the church which gives it to them.

Yes, we all feel that the joy of Christmas is a thing not made to order. It comes from a source which lies in the very mystery which we commemorate; and, even though we do not meditate or reflect on it, the stream from this source diffuses itself through our life and sweetens all the other joys which come at this time. And they come because of it; we make merry outwardly because we are, and have cause to be, glad at heart.

And what is this cause and source of joy? Is it because Christ our Lord has come to save us from sin and eternal ruin? No, it is not simply that; for we celebrate our salvation, our redemption, our ransom from the power of death and hell more specially at Easter than now. That is the festival of our Lord's triumph and our deliverance; it should and does open heaven to our souls, and give them a promise and almost forerun of it. But still it does not come home to our hearts as this beautiful time of Christmas does.

And no wonder; for at Easter we cannot but feel that our Lord, though triumphant and glorious, and promising us a share in His triumph and glory, still is separated from us. He has passed the portals of death, He has risen from the grave, He has come into the world again, but He has gone into His home where He has gone to all the stains of earth, till we have been purified and washed by penance in His Precious Blood. He has passed from mortal to immortal life, and it is the raising of the mortal to the immortal, of earth to heaven, that Easter celebrates. And this, though indeed it is the object of all our hope, is so high that we, sinners that we are, cannot fully make it our present joy.

But Christmas is heaven come down to earth. It is the God of heaven condescending to us; taking our weakness upon Him, sympathizing with us, and asking us for sympathy and love. He hides His majesty and glory; He veils the splendor of His face; He puts aside all that could distinguish Him from our selves. He invites us to come to Him without fear; He asks only that, sinful though we be, we should try to love Him as He loves us. Christmas is the sight of the Creator begging for the love of His creatures, and humbling Himself that He may obtain it; that is the reason why it goes to the heart of all who have any heart to give.

Let us then, in this happy season, enter into this joy which is the cause of all the rest which we have, which is so easy for us, which has come to our doors, and only asks that it should be let in. But let the love which goes with it be not a mere passing feeling, to bear no fruit in our lives. Let it bring us indeed to Him Who has come down to us; let our joy be crowned and perfected by a real return of our hearts to Him Who has done so much to win them; let us receive Him in deed and in truth in His holy sacraments, and never let Him go again.

## IMITATION OF CHRIST

HOW A DESOLATE PERSON GOUGHT TO OFFER HIMSELF INTO THE HANDS OF GOD.

I long for the joy of peace; I beg for the peace of Thy children; who are fed by Thee in the light of Thy consolation.

If Thou givest peace, if Thou infusest holy joy, the soul of Thy servant shall be full of melody and devout in Thy praise.

But if thou withdraw Thyself, as Thou art very often accustomed to do, he will not be able to live in the way of Thy commandments, but must rather bow down his knees and strike his breast; because it is not with him as it was yesterday and the day before, when Thy lamp shone over his head and he was covered under the shadow of Thy wings from temptations rushing in upon him.

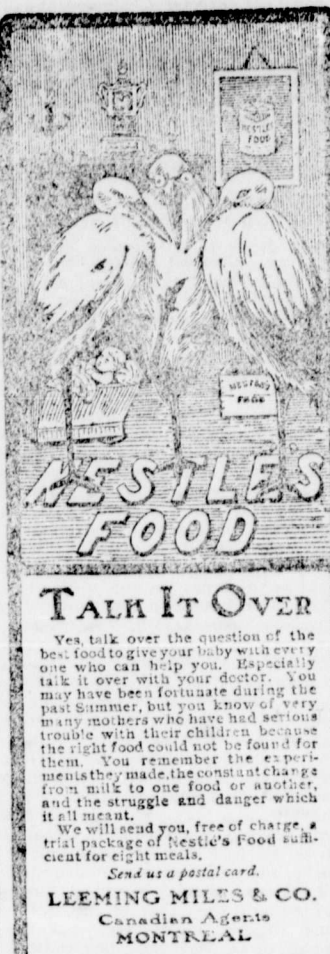
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## BETHELEHEM'S CHRISTMAS.

There is not one person in ten thousand who knows how the Christmas holiday is kept in Bethlehem, the city most closely connected with the day. Bethlehem of this time has eight thousand inhabitants, and is not attractive in appearance, as the streets are too narrow for vehicles. Only donkeys and camels and foot passengers travel the narrow alleys. The town is but five miles south of Jerusalem.

There is a splendid road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and the drivers take one over the ground at a furious speed. Of course, the city is larger and better built than in the time of Christ, but otherwise has not changed very essentially. The great church of the Nativity and some of the larger buildings are of a more recent date, but many of the buildings doubtless stood at the time of Christ's birth. At Christmas every one visits the field of the shepherds, a mile away from the church, which is reputed to be the place where the shepherds tended their flocks. Back at the big church a procession of Bishops, priests and people forms in the square before the edifice, each man dressed in his most gorgeous robes. Turkish soldiers line both sides of the streets to clear the way for the procession. The Latin patriarch of Jerusalem arrives, is met by a procession carrying banners and immense candles and all go into the Latin chapel through the main entrance.

The entrance is so small that but one can enter at a time, and he must stoop to do so. The reason for this is that the Mohammedans at one time did so much to annoy the Christians, even riding into the church on horseback, that the entrance was made small to keep them out. Inside the structure is very ancient, some of it dating from the time of Constantine. In the Latin chapel of St. Catherine services are held all night, and at midnight the Patriarch of Jerusalem says Mass. The chapel is filled with people sitting on the floor. Then the procession repairs to the grotto of the Nativity, under the church. Originally this was simply a natural cave in limestone rock. The original manger is preserved in Rome. Marble slabs cover the walls and floors and the ten-foot ceiling carries thirty-two brass lamps. Many religious pictures hang on the walls, and in the east end of the cave is a small recess hung about with fifteen lamps. On the floor of the recess a bright silver star is set in, and it is almost worn away from the constant kissing it receives.

Most of the worshippers remain in the church all night. The clear moon makes the country as bright as day. The Christmas day of Bethlehem is without the good cheer and happiness of our country, for the home life is so different. There is no feasting and giving of presents, only religious ceremonies.

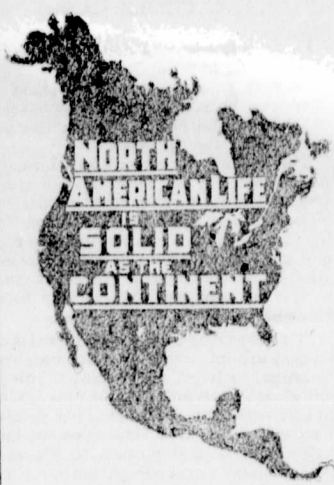
If we are educated let us, in the Master's name, instruct the ignorant; if we possess wealth, let us use it as God intended; if we have health, let us cheer some ill soul; if we enjoy any singular opportunities, consider them prayerfully, and in so doing we shall find that the moments that really shine out in our lives are those in which we have buried self and gone out into this busy and sinful world and have endeavored, by prayer and effort, to do His will, whose one great mission was to go about doing good.

Each star passes but once in the night through the meridian over our heads and shines there but an instant; so, in the heaven of the mind each thought touches its zenith but once, and in that moment all its brilliancy and all its greatness culminate.—Henri Frederic Amiel.

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