

Written for the CATHOLIC RECORD. FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF A CONVERT

CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK.

I shall now leave this phase of a convert's experiences—his perplexity at their throwing away of good things which, in an ordinary sense, one might suppose non-Catholics would have retained, as beneath to themselves, out of the wreckage of the so-called Reformation, if only upon the ground of their utility, for they lay such an impossible stress upon everything being strictly as per Scripture, and take up now some other matters, great and small, which from their unfamiliarity, elude the early attention and enquiries of a neophyte.

As so many of these things pertain to divine worship and its accessories, let me, for the sake of convenience, accompany one such as he walks home from church, and discuss them with him, answering his enquiries briefly, though far from as fully as might be, for he is anxious to have at least some bare outlines of the reasons for matters that he is unaccustomed to. Afterwards we can be his companion in the presbytery, the parish, the hospital, and the public street; and there is a possibility of encountering even the good bishop himself in our peregrinations.

And let those who read his questions (and know the answers well) have patience with the ingenuousness and artless simplicity of some of them, for they are very real matters of inquiry and concern to many such as he. Indeed the better Catholic he is likely to be if he is anxious to learn all he can of doctrine, and to enjoy, to some extent at least, the sweet perfumes which emanate from the flowers of devotion and practice. What he usually wants at first is not an elaborate treatise on every subject he mentions, but merely a few lucid words of explanation to the haphazard questions he, like most other converts, is prone to ask sooner or later. And if he knows his Bible well, so much the better; for if he has still an unhappy lingering fear, hard to shake off, that Holy Church might yet prove to be only a beautiful amalgam of one third Bible teaching and two thirds ecclesiastical regulations, he will the more speedily realize, from the constant references to Holy Writ, that the faith and practices of Catholics constitute them the most pronounced and consistent of "Bible Christians."

In a list could easily be made including scores of details of doctrine and practice in common use with which a convert in an average-sized parish would be more or less unfamiliar at the beginning of his Catholic career; but as want of space forbids the mention of all, I must perforce confine my remarks to a very limited number. On all such points I know of no book for the enquirer better than Father Conway's "Question Box," to be had at the CATHOLIC RECORD, London, and other Catholic bookellers.

Observed, is the first query of our convert, that at my conditional baptism the priest, among other things, requested me to take the name of one of the canonized saints of the Church in addition to the somewhat meaningless forename I already possessed. Why was this? This is done so that by bearing the saint's name the person may be excited to imitate his virtues and holiness; and that he may invoke his aid and intercession for the salvation of his soul and the safety of his body.

He also breathed upon me three times. What did this represent? It signified that your soul, as yet unregenerated, was under the power of the evil one, and the breathing was done to drive him away, as by the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit or breath of God. It also emphasizes the concept which Christians should and may feel for him, and the ease with which he can be put to flight like straw before the wind. You remember that our Lord used this ceremony of breathing when he imparted the Holy Spirit to his Apostles to empower them to forgive sins. It is therefore quite scriptural.

The priest also placed a few grains of salt upon my tongue—no doubt to symbolize something; and here let me say once for all that I do not object to true reasonable symbolism, for I see its usefulness in the army, the navy, the law courts, everywhere, in fact; and I know that symbol is useless unless what they stand for are very real, but what did it mean? Salt is the symbol of wisdom, as when St. Paul said to the Colossians: "Let your speech be always with grace seasoned with salt." It also preserves sweetness from corruption. Show to the world the sweet savor of God's law, and by your works that the doctrine of Christ preserves the soul from corruption. Let the words of your mouth be now virtuous and holy; have a relish for divine things.

Why did he touch my ears and nostrils with a little spittle, saying "Ephpheta"? St. Mark tells us that our Lord cured a dumb and deaf man using the same actions and saying "Ephpheta"—"Be opened!" Before you were baptised you were spiritually deaf and dumb. The Church, the depositary of the power of Jesus Christ, follows His example to signify the necessity of having the senses of the soul open to His truth and grace.

He anointed me on the breast and between the shoulders, and after baptism, the crown of my head, with oil. Why? That upon the breast signifies the inward anointing of the heart, to fortify it against passions, and the healing of the wounds of the soul. Oil is the symbol of the sweetness of the yoke of Christ, and the anointing between the shoulders signifies the necessity of divine grace in order to support the adversities and crosses of this mortal life. The anointing the crown of your head is of Apostolic origin, and signifies that you are now solemnly consecrated to God's service; that by baptism you are made partaker with Christ the great "Anointed of God" and share His unction and grace; that you are anointed to be king, priest and prophet; that as king you must rule your passions; as

priest you must offer yourself continually to God as a living sacrifice; as prophet you must declare by your life the rewards of the heavenly kingdom.

Why was a lighted candle put into my hand after baptism? St. Matthew tells us of a parable of Jesus in which the ten virgins "taking their lamps went out to meet the bridegroom." You must now walk as a child of light, keeping the lamp of faith burning with the oil of charity and good works, so that when you meet the Lord you will not be found like some of those virgins who, when they met the bridegroom, had no oil, and their lamps had gone out.

TO BE CONTINUED.

HOME RULE WILL NOT DOWN.

LIVELY DEBATE IN THE ENGLISH HOUSE OF COMMONS.

(Associated Press Dispatch.)

London, March 30.—The House of Commons to-night after a lengthy debate on the question of Home Rule for Ireland, adopted by a vote of 313 to 157 a resolution moved by John E. Redmond, the Nationalist leader, that "in the opinion of this House a solution of this question can only be attained by giving the Irish people legislative and executive control of all purely Irish affairs."

But the resolution was first amended by adding the words "all subject to the supreme authority of the Imperial Parliament."

MR. BALFOUR'S ACCUSATION.

It was known beforehand that the debate could have but an academic interest, because the Government already had pledged that there would be no deal in the matter of Home Rule until it had been given a mandate at the general election. But the debate was made notable through the strong declaration of Chancellor Asquith, which was all the weightier because made at the moment Mr. Asquith was actually assuming the Premiership.

Mr. Balfour, in a brief speech, had accused his opponents of speaking with two meanings—a Radical meaning and a Nationalist meaning. He asked how it was conceivably possible to carry out great Irish reforms with British money except by a British Parliament, and ironically challenged Mr. Asquith to clear up this ambiguity.

MR. ASQUITH'S STATE POSITION.

Arid ironic United States laughter Mr. Asquith rose and said that never in his life had he felt less embarrassed.

For over twenty years he himself and his colleagues had steadily and consistently advocated self-government for Ireland's purely local affairs. He held that opinion now as strongly as ever. He could not, however, support Mr. Redmond's motion in its present form, because he found in it no explicit recognition of Imperial supremacy, and, further, because no Parliament would be justified in embarking on such a task unless the matter first had been submitted to the electorate. It would be a gross and inexcusable violation of their promises to do so in the life of the present Parliament. So far as the present Parliament was concerned, he said, they had expressed their powers in regard to the problem of Irish government in the Irish Councils bill last year.

MR. REDMOND'S REPLY.

In moving the adoption of his resolution Mr. Redmond declared that an overwhelming majority of the present House of Commons always had professed their belief that the concession of Home Rule was the only solution of the Irish problem, and that every member of the present Government at one time or another had given public pledges to the same effect. He now proposed to put them on record, and free the hands of the Liberal party and the Government at the next elections, so as to make sure that there would be no repetition of the gratuitous pledges made by so many of the members at the last election not to introduce Home Rule during the life of the present Parliament.

The only argument remaining against Home Rule, Mr. Redmond continued, was an argument of fear. It is said, he declared, that Ireland is disloyal; so was Canada in 1837, and so was General Botha until the Transvaal was given self-government. Mr. Redmond in conclusion asked the House to give Ireland that which had been given the Frenchmen of Quebec and the Dutchmen of the Transvaal, and thus close the blackest chapter in the history of the empire.

BIRRELL ALL FOR HOME RULE.

Mr. Augustine Birrell, Chief Secretary for Ireland, came out squarely in support of Home Rule, and declared there was not a member of the House of Commons but who knew that sooner or later there would be a very substantial modification in the relations between Great Britain and Ireland. The Imperial Parliament, he said, had not time to attend to the needs of Ireland; there were scores of vital measures requiring immediate and constant attention, and they were going to allow "something like hell" to prevail in Ireland. If the Nationalists should bring their proposals clearly before the people at the next general election, Mr. Birrell said, he believed the English electorate would rally to their help in solving the problem.

TIMOTHY HEALY'S ATTACK.

Mr. Timothy Healy closed the debate declaring that Mr. Asquith was mistaken if he supposed he would command himself to the Irish nation by his speech.

Mr. Healy's speech was a scathing attack on the Chancellor. He reminded the House that on the question of amnesty for the dynamiters some years ago Mr. Asquith "closed the gates of mercy with a clang," but the gates were opened by the Tory party within two years.

Then, referring to the oration of the Pigott forger, Mr. Healy said that the only thing he regretted was that Mr. Asquith was engaged in that case to defend the Parnellites. Continuing he said that it was on the Irish question that Mr. Asquith came into notice. "To-day he is an important man," said the speaker; "to-morrow he

may be a god, but we shall not worship at his shrine."

Mr. Healy's argument was that the Conservatives would force "free trade versus protection" as a plank at the next general election; therefore Mr. Asquith's attitude meant indefinite deferment of Home Rule.

Earl Percy on behalf of the Unionists moved an amendment declaring the House to be unalterably opposed to the creation of an Irish Parliament with a responsible executive, but the amendment was rejected.

London, March 31.—John F. Redmond, the Nationalist leader, whose resolution on Home Rule for Ireland, with some amendment, was adopted in the House of Commons yesterday by a vote of 313 to 157, said to the Associated Press to-night:

"For the first time in history the House of Commons, by an overwhelming majority, declared itself in favor of Home Rule. Gladstone's bill in 1886 was rejected by a majority of 30. His bill in 1893 was carried by a majority, 'never beyond' 10, and on certain amendments it was defeated by five or six. The resolution in favor of Home Rule last evening was carried by a majority of 156."

"This result is the more remarkable when the terms of the resolution are considered. It was not a resolution in favor of a half-way house, or devolution. I put the Home Rule claim in its frank and fullest form, for it demanded a Parliament in Dublin and an executive responsible to that Parliament. Both the spokesmen of the ministry not only pledged themselves, but the whole Liberal party, to Home Rule."

Secretary Birrell said that the Liberal party was the Home Rule party; Mr. Asquith declared his unalterable conviction that Home Rule was the only settlement of the Irish question. Every single member of the administration, including not only Mr. Asquith, Secretary Birrell, and John Morley, but Sir Edward Grey and Secretary Haldane, voted for the resolution. They only professed the condition that they were precluded by their pledges from introducing such a measure in this Parliament by the question as to the position Home Rule should occupy in the programme of the Liberal party at the next election.

The ministers declared that this depended not upon them, but upon the Irish people and the Irish party. We cannot, they said, introduce a measure in this Parliament by the question as to the position Home Rule should occupy in the programme of the Liberal party at the next election.

THE SIN OF THE AGE IS UNBELIEF, OR indifference to religion. The effect of this unbelief is manifesting itself in various shapes and forms. Anarchy, dishonesty, distrust, discontentment, the irrepressible conflict, if not hate between Capital and Labor, the scandal of the divorce court and many other evils are all born of infidelity, or the result of indifference to religious teaching. We are a Christian nation, at least such is our proud boast, but practically we are pagans, worship the golden calf and offer incense to the demon of lust. But why this decay of Christian ethics and Christian truth? The foundation upon which Christianity rests is as strong in its appeal to man's reason to-day as it was when it converted pagan Rome. Christ challenged the world to point out a single act of His that was not good, and when appealing to mankind to have faith in Him, he gave His reason for referring to His works. "If you believe not Me, believe My works." "They bear testimony of Me."

Unbelievers study the authenticity of the gospels and the harmony existing between them and the prophecies made from five hundred to a thousand years before, how in these prophecies the entire life of our Lord from Bethlehem to Calvary, even in the minutest details, is portrayed. His glorious resurrection, the peace which He brought on earth to men of good will, and the diffusion of His gospel throughout the universe are all described. Then came the fulfillment of the prophecies which He made of Himself. Any unbeliever denying all these motives of credibility, and a good will will soon cease to doubt and profess religion if he be consistent with himself. It is no light matter to throw aside Christianity. To be a professed unbeliever requires a greater effort of the will and will than it does to say, "I believe in God."

Unbelievers, to justify their abnormal state, will ask for an explanation of mysteries, so that they may be able to deny to reason. But faith has the right to ask them to explain or destroy the proofs which clearly demonstrate the existence of such mysteries. If faith be unable to explain the nature or composition of a mystery, neither can infidelity or rationalism destroy the proof of its existence. There is an impossibility then of denying the infidelity's impossibility is more detrimental to reason.

Christian mysteries, which pertain to the heavenly sphere, the supernatural order, cannot be explained because they partake of the nature of the Infinite; but the proofs of the existence of said mysteries pertain to the world—that is, human knowledge. Therefore it devolves on the unbeliever to destroy those proofs given in favor of Christian mysteries, since they belong to the tangible order.

A Christian may be unable to explain the great mystery of the Blessed Trinity, so that the unbeliever could see it as he does some natural fact, for it is explained. Why? Because it is a mystery, essentially partaking of the Infinite. If it could be explained it would not belong to the religion of God.

The man of faith has the right to ask the unbeliever to explain, in his sense, the harmony that exists between the Mosaic narrative and science, the prophecies and the gospels, the institution and growth of Christianity, the person of Christ, for these are living visible and tangible facts, facts which have been rigidly tested in the past, which still survive, and will yet remain when all the criticisms of the Twentieth century are lost or forgotten.

They cannot explain these; their existence is certain. The point at issue is so serious, namely, infinite happiness, that the unbeliever should study the question seriously and humbly, that he might reach the goal of the doubting

who was driven out of Massachusetts by the Puritans, settled Rhode Island in 1639 and made it a haven for the persecuted who could not accept the austere religious and political opinions enforced by the Pilgrim Fathers of Massachusetts. Mr. Willams rebelled against such orthodoxy and his banishment was decreed for daring to entertain opinions on religion and politics at variance with those held by the ruler of the colony of Massachusetts. As soon as he and his followers settled Rhode Island the declaration of the liberty of conscience was proclaimed and soon a thriving colony was built up. Ever since the little commonwealth which imbibed freedom at the beginning has been most considerate of the religious convictions of others and the protective laws which found their way to the statutes of sister States were not permitted to discriminate against the Catholics of Rhode Island. It is true there was much prejudice against them before the Revolution and for some time after, but a Catholic stood a better show for advancement in that little corner of New England than he did anywhere else in the eastern country. During the civil war the proportion of Catholics who enlisted for the war was larger than that of the Protestants, reckoning the difference in population. Nowhere in the north did the area of Catholic blood run more brightly than in Rhode Island and a soldier was enrolled for every 10 of its dwellers. All told, over 27,000 rallied for active service in the field of its total of 270,000.

The Irish and their descendants and the French Canadians and their off spring are mainly responsible for this preponderance in religious belief. The Italians, the Portuguese and the Germans have done something to bring this about. The Irish and those of that blood born in this country number about 100,000, or nearly one fifth of the total; those of French blood about 80,000.

It is admitted by those who keep track of the development of population in New England that every State there will repeat the experience of Rhode Island within the next 40 years.—Union Globe.

DECAY OF RELIGION.

The sin of the age is unbelief, or indifference to religion. The effect of this unbelief is manifesting itself in various shapes and forms. Anarchy, dishonesty, distrust, discontentment, the irrepressible conflict, if not hate between Capital and Labor, the scandal of the divorce court and many other evils are all born of infidelity, or the result of indifference to religious teaching. We are a Christian nation, at least such is our proud boast, but practically we are pagans, worship the golden calf and offer incense to the demon of lust. But why this decay of Christian ethics and Christian truth? The foundation upon which Christianity rests is as strong in its appeal to man's reason to-day as it was when it converted pagan Rome. Christ challenged the world to point out a single act of His that was not good, and when appealing to mankind to have faith in Him, he gave His reason for referring to His works. "If you believe not Me, believe My works." "They bear testimony of Me."

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Thomas who first proclaimed the divinity of Christ. "My Lord and my God." Truth does not exist if there be no truth in Christianity. If Christianity cometh not from God it destroys the very idea of God.—Intermountain Catholic.

MODERNISM DYING.

The future of Modernism? A few months ago it might have been difficult to say, but the situation is growing every day clearer. The heresy has been condemned by the Church and by every Bishop in the Church, the periodicals that favoured it have either loyalty accepted the Catholic teaching or have disappeared, or have utterly lost credit; non-Catholic organs like the *Giornale d'Italia* have found that it does not pay to exploit the heresy and are gradually changing their tune; Protestant organs like *The Times* have soon grown tired of putting little men on big pedestals, and now at last the anticlerical and Jacobin *Mess* or of Paris has told the *Abbe Loisy* and his followers in very plain language that they have ceased to be interesting and have become tiresome. M. Geruit Richard writes about them as follows in this organ:

"I would not like to say anything unkind about any body, but the Modernists are becoming extremely tiresome and it is impossible to feel sorry for them or to side with them against the Pope and the Bishops who condemn them. Let us once for all come to an understanding as to the character and quality of religions, whatever they may be. A Catholic remains a Catholic only on condition that he believes everything taught by his Church. The day he begins to sophisticate about the dogmas, or to pick and choose among them, accepting this one and rejecting that, that day he ceases to be a Catholic. Why should he then retain the name and appeal to the principles of Catholicism? This is what the Modernists are trying to do. They prove by their writings that the greater part of the miraculous accounts of the Gospel are false, and thus they repudiate the very essence of the faith, and yet they remain priests, monks, confessors, canons, professors of sacraments, and so on! They are like the shop man who would say to the customers: 'Everything sold here is rubbish and old books not worth two pence, and the proprietor is robbing you of your money.' Any proprietor would put such a shop man at once outside the door, and nobody could say that he was wrong." The language is cynical, but the logic is plain enough to strike even a Modernist.—*Rome*.

THE PAPACY AND CHRISTENDOM.

IS THE PAPACY AN OBSTACLE TO THE RE-UNION OF CHRISTENDOM?

Archbishop Ireland in North American Review.

Under the above caption and in answer to the query—Is the Papacy an Obstacle to the Re-union of Christendom?—there is in the January number of the North American Review a controversial article from the pen of the Most Reverend John Ireland, Archbishop of St. Paul. His contribution to the question is a most able presentation of the claims of the Papacy. "The Papacy," says Archbishop Ireland, "is a stupendous fact in history; none can ignore it; all must feel interested in what may be said of it by friend or foe. Peter alone is the rock; Peter alone feeds lambs and sheep; Peter alone confirms (strengthens) the brethren. All who are in the Church, apostles included, are built on Peter."

The grants of power made by Christ are of two kinds, each different from the other. There is the grant of the Apostolate to the whole Apostolic body; and there is that of the Prince-dom to Peter alone. All apostles are teachers; all bind and loose; but, except Peter, none teach, bind, or loose independently; the brethren of Peter teach, bind, or loose under his guidance; Peter alone is independent and un-fettered, having a commission peculiar to himself, given to himself alone. Peter is Bishop and apostle; so are all the other members of the body; but, Peter also is the prince, master and governor. In other terms, the Pope is Monarch of the Church.

Referring to the powers of the Pope, the Archbishop writes: "It is not to be supposed that Catholic faith allows the Pope to alter or transform the Church, or anything in the Church that is of divine ordering. Nor can the Pope alter or transform the official teaching of Oecumenical Councils or of his own predecessors; this would be to deny the doctrinal infallibility with which Catholic faith holds those official teachings to be endowed. In matters of practical administration the Pope is not infallible. Hence, most loyal subjects of the Papacy may take, and not seldom do take, the liberty to offer respectful remonstrance. Councils or remonstrances are no denial of authority, and imply no refusal of obedience."

"The Bishop of Rome is the Monarch of the Church, the centre of Christian unity. I have indicated in what sense his authority may be limited—limited by the divine teaching of the Scripture, the unanimous consent of the Christian Fathers, the divine order established in the Church, the dogmatic decrees of councils and previous Pontiffs; limited, also, by the natural law of justice and equity."

"How great the need of the Papacy in the Christian world is evidenced to-day as, perhaps, never before during its history. How little time it would take, even within the Roman Fold, to hurl into a similar chaos 'people and ministry,' were the Papacy to cease or to suspend its teachings, is made evident by the recent rise, even there, of those enemies against the faith, which the Encyclical of Modernism in religion has so severely rebuked. The Roman Communion is saved from the dogmatic chaos in which Protestant churches are so hopelessly engulfed because in it the Papacy reigns and teaches."

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CARDINAL GIBBONS ON THE MODERN WOMAN.

"The world is governed more by ideals than by ideas; it is influenced more by living concrete models than by abstract principles of virtue. Mary is the pattern of virtue, alike to maiden, wife and mother. She exhibits the virginal modesty becomng the maid, the conjugal fidelity and loyalty of the spouse and the untiring devotedness of the mother."

"The Christian woman is everywhere confronted by her great mother, Mary's portrait gazes down upon her from the wall. Her name is repeated in the pages of the book before her. Her eulogy is pronounced from the pulpit and altars, and temples are dedicated in her honor. Festivals are celebrated in her praise. In a word, the Virgin Mother is indelibly stamped on the intellect, the heart, the memory and the imagination of the Catholic daughter."

The influence of Mary, therefore, in the moral elevation of women can hardly be over-estimated. She is the perfect combination of all that is great and good and noble in womanhood, with no alloy or degradation. Hers is exquisite beauty, but a beauty more of the soul than of the body; it delights, without intoxicating. The contemplation of her excites no inward rebellion, as too often happens with Grecian models. She is the mother of fair love, devoid of sickly sentimentality or sensuality. In her we find force of will, without pride or imperiousness. We find her moral strength and heroism, without the sacrifice of female grace and honor—a heroism of silent suffering rather than of noisy action.—*Sacred Heart Review*.

THE CAUSES OF UNBELIEF.

Gibbon the author of the well written but unreliable "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," a title, by the way, taken from Montesquieu's earlier work, tells us that after his conversion to the Catholic faith at the age of sixteen, the age of his innocence and still uncontaminated purity, his father "threatened to banish, disown and disinherit his rebellious son;" and then inflamed with Anglican hate of the true Church sent him in exile to Lausanne, in Switzerland, to live in the house and under the tutelage of a Calvinist minister named Pavillard, where in "exile and a prisoner, after some irregularities of wine, of play and of idle excursions," he lost his faith and became a Calvinist, to end his career as was natural, in infidelity. Thus hatred of the Church by the father, a typical of eighteenth century Anglican, brought the son into the quagmire of unbelief. But his hatred of the Catholic Church still lives and acts in many a so-called Christian heart. "Let him be anything, Unitarian, deist or infidel, but not a Papist" is the cry of many a modern Gibbon senior in dealing with his children. And consequently many of them prefer to be infidel and take their place in the army of hate of everything Catholic.—*The Monitor, Newark*.

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