

WHEN LUTHER BOLTED

The Church was the Great Civilizing Agent in Europe.

In the preface to a very learned treatise on the "Reformation," so called, a distinguished German ecclesiastic discourses very impressively upon the achievements and labors of the Church prior to the secession of Luther and his followers.

From the middle of the thirteenth century, Germany is no longer but an anarchical federation of principalities and cities that are republics. No more collective life, no German army, no finances, no justice. War is everywhere, and no longer is there any right but the right of might.

The historical review in the preface mentioned gives the following outline of the Church's condition when the horrid anarchy, unbelief and irreligion broke loose upon Christian Europe: If we take a survey of the Church's labors among the Germanic and Slavie peoples, and if we compare the beginning with the end of her activity in the middle ages, we see savage and undisciplined hordes adopting a regular and more perfect order of society; we observe gigantic progress in intelligence, a transformation, a complete renewal of European humanity in all the conditions of life.

The same phenomenon was witnessed in the moral and intellectual sphere. Minds had been enlightened, hearts ennobled, war had been waged against ignorance, error and vice; the life of the peoples had been strengthened and polished. The whole of Europe was converted to the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

Slavery, except in very few cases, had disappeared, marriage was sanctified, family life organized. Priests, monks and knights, city people and rural laborers, all conditions were developed and strengthened. As in the case of families, corporations and communes had taken on regular habits, and the individual felt secure in the midst of the mass.

Unfortunately this peaceful and normal progress was not to be left to the peoples of Europe. On the contrary, it was impeded by their own fault. Life itself concealed germs of death; fresh struggles, other storms were then gathering before the preceding ones had yet subsided, and they were to be more severe, more productive of dire evils than most of those that had raged hitherto.

No doubt the Christian peoples were still united by indissoluble bonds, and the destinies of one nation had more or less influence on the destinies of another nation; but the knot that bound them was purely human, external, artificial, and was above all, the advantages and the inconveniences of things terrestrial, the progress of material activity, the desire to multiply the relations and to favor commerce that brought about between the peoples those closer, but no longer sincere associations.

Among the changes that were then effected we may note the establishment of postal routes, introduced into France in the reign of Louis XI, and into Germany by Maximilian I; the invention of gunpowder, which was going to destroy the old chivalry and revolutionize the art of war; the employment of paid troops and the organization of standing armies, a fresh

burden on the peoples; the discovery of unknown countries, which developed navigation and commerce, as well as the passion for gain and the taste for adventure; the invention of printing, which was in turn the instrument of good and that of evil, enabled the ideas that were agitating the people to be spread broadcast in the twinkling of an eye.

The ancient classic literature, with its pagan spirit and its passion for liberty, the immortal poetry and romances, the biting satires of the ancient and the modern writers, the placards inciting to insurrection, the lessons and dissertations of the political and religious agitators were also rapidly circulated—more rapidly even among the different peoples than the books of edification and religious instruction. Dissatisfied with the existing order, and fond of novelties, people had long abused the words reform and liberty; they coveted others' goods, especially the rich domains of the clergy.

It seemed, on the one hand, that the infatuation for novelty was everywhere going to overthrow the old and traditional order, and, on the other hand, a dangerous stagnation was impeding progress, and vigorous efforts were needed to get free from it.

Therein consists the essential difference, the characteristic trait that separates modern history from the history of the middle ages. The consequences were far-reaching beyond all calculation. A complete transformation begins with the great heresy of the West, Protestantism, which contained in germ the negation of all religious tradition, the radical repudiation of all the principles of Catholicism, and, besides, the germ of the political and social revolutions, the remote consequences of which were to be developed but gradually.

Religious unity was replaced by the multiplicity of sects; liberty protected by order sometimes made way for an unbridled anarchy, sometimes for a political despotism that disregarded all liberty of conscience. A multitude of new enemies, public or secret, arose against the old Church; many of the works she had called into existence, of her most splendid cathedrals, of her artistic wealth, were brutally annihilated, and after unheard of deprecations, wounds of the severest kinds were inflicted on herself. But the Church was proof against the new attacks, which sometimes exceeded the old in violence; she continued to spread in spite of the severest persecution, reconquered lost provinces by spiritual arms, gained new and brilliant triumphs over revived paganism and over heresy after it had become all-powerful, while she applied herself to renovating within herself what had become impaired, to correcting what was defective, and bore new fruits having a flavor that never paled.

THE CONFESSIONAL SEAL

Under no Circumstances Can it be Broken.

A writer in the Providence Visitor throws light upon some cloudy comments and deductions on and from a recent event in England where a doctor was heavily fined for disclosing professional secrets that came to his knowledge in the sick room. We quote from his excellent essay as follows:

Anent the case of Dr. Playfair, the eminent London practitioner who was lately mulcted in heavy damages for betraying the secrets of the sick room, the secular papers, English and American, have been laying down the law about medical "privileges" with singular emphasis and unanimity. They assure us that the secrets of a physician are as sacred as those of a confessor. Now this doctrine is quite incorrect.

Between the secrets of the sick room and the secrets of the confessional there are differences so profound—differences in nature and extent—that it makes one wonder how the newspaper people could fail to note them.

Secrets are of three kinds. By a natural secret is meant any fact learned either by chance or by inquiry whose revelation will work injury to the fair fame of the person or persons concerned. Again, if the owner of a secret, learning that another person is in possession of the facts, persuades that person to give a guarantee of silence, we have a case of a secret of promise. Again, suppose the owner of a secret, wishing to enlist the services of a professional man in complications arising out of that secret, exposes the whole matter, the professional man so consulted is bound to silence not only by the law of the contract, but also by an implicit contract. Here we have a case of a

secret trust. Secrets of trust must be sacredly kept against all comers, unless their keeping entails injury either to some innocent outside party or to the community at large. The reason of the exception is easy to see. When there is a conflict of rights, the better right prevails. The rights of the innocent are to be preferred before those of the guilty, and those of the community to those of an individual. Dr. Playfair was convicted of violating a secret of trust. His case, apparently, was one to which the exceptions just noted did not apply.

Now turn we to the consideration of the secret of the confessional, and, in passing, we warn our readers against certain novelists who, straining after dramatic effect, have presumed to handle this tempting but difficult subject.

Like the physician and the lawyer, the confessor is bound to secrecy with regard to disreputable facts learned in the exercise of his official functions. He is held by the law of natural secrets and by the law of implicit contract. But he is bound by another and mightier title, the title of religion. So that a betrayal of confidence by a confessor would, in addition to the two-fold sin of breaking the law, the most important being contrition and purpose of amendment:

Q. What is contrition or sorrow for sin? A. It is a hatred of sin and a true grief of the soul for having offended God, with a firm purpose of sinning no more.

Q. What kind of sorrow should we have? A. It should be interior—that is to say, it should come from the heart, and not merely from the lips; it should be supernatural—that is to say, prompted by the grace of God, and excited by motives which spring from faith, and not by merely natural motives; it should be universal—that is to say, we should be sorry for all our mortal sins without exception; it should be supreme—that is to say, we should grieve more for having offended God than for any other evil that can befall us.

Q. How does the Church, by means of Indulgences, remit the temporal punishment (that is to say, the pains of purgatory) due to sin? A. By applying to us the merits of Jesus Christ, and the superabundant satisfactions of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the saints; which merits and satisfactions are the Church's spiritual treasury.

Q. To gain an Indulgence we must be in the grace of God and must perform the good works enjoined. Suppose the priest gives absolution to a sinner not truly sorry, do Catholics believe the sins are forgiven? No!

Q. And if he have not a firm purpose of amendment of life, do they believe his sins forgiven by absolution? No! Or if he is unwilling to make good the injury he has done his neighbor, does absolution avail? No!

Q. And suppose he has not firmly resolved to avoid the persons or circumstances which cause him to sin, is the absolution good for anything? No!

Q. And no! a thousand times to the base calumny which says that money is paid by Catholics for pardon of sin, or that any liberty to sin ever is or can be given by the Church or her ministers.

Q. Catholics do not believe that the Blessed Virgin is in any way equal or comparable to God, for she, being a creature, although the most highly favored, is infinitely less than God. Nor do they claim for her any power beyond that which she derives from Him; for she is entirely dependent on God for her existence, her privileges, her grace and her glory.

WHAT CATHOLICS DO NOT BELIEVE

(Tract of the Catholic Truth Society.)

CATHOLICS DO NOT BELIEVE that mere confession of sin procures pardon; or that once confession is over nothing more is to be done. They do not believe that pardon for sin can be purchased for money, or that the Church, or any one else, can grant a license to sin; they abhor such blasphemous delusions.

Q. Nor do they believe that sins can be forgiven in any way whatever, but by the grace of Jesus Christ in the bestowment of the Holy Spirit upon a truly repentant soul.

Q. Listen to the Catholic Catechism of the Council of Baltimore: Ques. Why did Christ suffer and die? Ans. Christ suffered and died for our sins.

Q. What lessons do we learn from the sufferings and death of Christ? A. We learn the great evil of sin, the hatred God bears to it, and the necessity of satisfying for it.

Q. And, again, about the dispositions necessary for the pardon of sins in the sacrament of penance, or confession, the most important being contrition and purpose of amendment:

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Q. What do you mean by a firm purpose of sinning no more? A. I mean a fixed resolve not only to avoid all mortal sins, but also all venial ones, and things that may easily lead us into sin.

Q. Once more, listen to what the Church teaches about Indulgences: Q. Is an Indulgence a pardon of sin or a licence to commit sin? A. No, it is not a pardon of sin, nor a licence to commit sin, and one who is in a state of mortal sin cannot gain an Indulgence.

Q. How does the Church, by means of Indulgences, remit the temporal punishment (that is to say, the pains of purgatory) due to sin? A. By applying to us the merits of Jesus Christ, and the superabundant satisfactions of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the saints; which merits and satisfactions are the Church's spiritual treasury.

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Q. What lessons do we learn from the sufferings and death of Christ? A. We learn the great evil of sin, the hatred God bears to it, and the necessity of satisfying for it.

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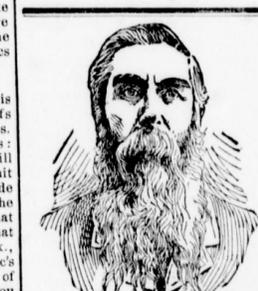
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Pope Leo's efforts in favor of the French Republic. But wouldn't she persecute Protestants if she had the power? No! Wouldn't she like to get political control of this country? No! But isn't the Church trying to destroy our public school system? No! She would like to improve it by making it more parental. Catholics are persuaded that parental rights must be carefully safeguarded in our public school system. Away, then, with all prejudice. Away with all blind hatreds and whole-accusations. Away with the monstrous delusion that we are idolaters, adorers of saints and of their dumb images; that we are the accomplices or dupes of intriguing and corrupt priests; that we pay money for the pardon of sin or purchase licence to sin; that we hate the Bible, and are foes of liberty and intelligence and progress and humanity. We differ, indeed, from you in religious matters; but we know we are right and we can prove it, if you will only give us

Fair Play.



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