

ORIGIN AND BLESSING OF BELLS.

CONCLUDED.
Finally, the bell is dedicated to a particular saint, that under his auspices, the consecrated signal may exert a happy influence over the faithful, and that they may hearken to its holy appeals, as if to the voice of one who now reigns in heaven, and calls upon them to imitate his assiduity and fervor in discharging the duties of religion.

When these mysterious anointings are finished, the attendants bring the censor to the bishop, with perfumed drugs, myrrh, and incense. These are put into the censor in the usual way, and left burning beneath until the singing of the last Gospel. Incense is of frequent use in the ceremonies of the church, and implies the energy and activity of holy prayers, which when heated by the fire of divine love, rise up and penetrate to the throne of God as a sacrifice of sweet-smelling savour. And this being a principal duty to which the bell invites us, hence the free use of incense in its consecration.

Lastly, a portion of the Gospel is said or sung by the deacon from the tenth chapter of St. Luke, which describes the visit of our blessed Saviour to Mary and Martha, in which Mary is commended for her assiduous attendance on his sacred person, and the over-solicitude of Martha is gently reproofed, in that solemn and memorable admonition,—“Martha, Martha, thou art solicitous and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary.” (Luke x, 41 and 42).

Such is the great lesson which the bell is intended frequently to preach to us. It will break in upon our occupations, whether serious or gay, whether lawful or unlawful.—Like the voice of Christ to Martha, it will remind us of the inutility of much that we are doing, perhaps even of its sinfulness.—It will discourse, wisely and forcibly, of the value of the soul, and of the importance of attending to its salvation; of the shortness of time and the awful length of eternity.—It will sound like the solemn warnings of the last trumpet, and teach us to prepare whilst preparation is practicable. It will entone the angelical salutation three times each day, and bid us bend our heads, and humble our hearts in the adoration of the adorable mystery of the Incarnation. It will regulate a variety of duties, as its ancient inscription purports,

*Laudo Deum verum. Plebem voco. Congrego Clerum.
Defunctos ploro. Festem fugo. Festa decoro*

It will summon us to prayer, morning and evening; it will notify in deeper tones the celebration of the awful mysteries. It will remind us of the duty of praying for the dead, it will encourage us to pray in seasons of danger, it will multiply its admonitions on our holy Sabbaths, and give a cheerful solemnity to the days consecrated to a more particular worship.*

These remarks will suffice to explain the nature of the ceremony by which bells are consecrated, and to overthrow completely the grounds on which modern fanaticism has undertaken to brand it with the note of superstition. In the judgment of those

Discourse of the Rev. Dr Weedall.

who sincerely investigate the truth, and who find no gratification in the low artifice of impugning and denouncing, by unfair representation, every practice that savors of Catholic piety, it is obvious that the whole rite is nothing more than a solemn dedication of a work of art to the noble purposes of religion, and a prayer of the Church by which she invokes upon her children the grace of being benefited by its use. How then can it be asserted that this ceremony is considered by the Catholic Church as a baptism? Does it follow that it is looked upon as a real baptism, because this name is given to it in the popular language of certain districts, on account of the similarity between some parts of the solemn rite and the baptismal ceremony? Does it argue candor or reflection in our adversaries to prefer such a charge, when the absurdity implied in it is not less ridiculous than impious? If the bells that are consecrated are sometimes placed under the care or patronage of certain individuals, who may superintend their employment, these persons are improperly called sponsors, and the ceremony used by the Church does not require the presence of any such individuals.† As to the imputation that bells were rung at funerals and during storms, to frighten away the demons that were supposed to hover around the dead, or to be authors of the tempest, it is too plainly the offspring of ignorance or malevolence. If our fore fathers entertained the opinion that storms could be averted by the agitation of the air, resulting from the sounding of bells, perhaps they erred a little, although innocently, by calculating too large upon a principle upon natural philosophy; but they undoubtedly proved themselves vastly superior to their critics of modern times, in the theory and practice of Christian philosophy, which led them to toll the bell at the funeral of the dead, as a warning voice to the living, and, in the fury of the tempest, to send forth its sound, hallowed as it was by the orisons of religion, and a cry of alarm, and as a general supplication to him who wields the thunderbolts of heaven, that he would look to the affliction of his servants, and avert the dangers with which they were threatened. In all this there might be something offensive to that desolating puritanism which has endeavored to divorce nature from its Divine Author, by denying all religious influence to the external world, but in the eyes of reason, it will always be a mark of true religion, as well as the glory of the Catholic Church, to make use of outward things, as fit and powerful agents for awakening in the heart of man the most salutary impressions. “Praise ye the Lord in his holy places: praise him with sound of trumpet; praise him with psaltery and harp; praise him on high-sounding cymbals; praise him on cymbals of joy; let every spirit praise the Lord.” *Ps. 150—U.S. Cath. Mag.*

* It is stated in the Capitulars of Charlemagne, that this prince forbade the ceremony, because, says a writer, it was thought by some to be a baptism. That this prohibition however was merely a prudential and temporary measure, to prevent the growth of an erroneous notion among the people, is manifest from the fact, that the ordinance of the emperor was not enforced, and the custom of blessing bells prevailed throughout the Church in a form not liable to abuse. Pops John XIII, in the tenth century, was not the author of this ceremony, as may be seen from Martene, lib. 2 de Antiq. Eccl. Rit. c. 21.

† See Roman Pontifical.

From the Catholic Advocate. THE TRUE CHURCH. CONTINUED.

The manifest intention of Christ, in founding this church, was to propagate the principles of his religion; that is, to make them known over the whole world, and to all men, even until the end of time.

Those who should receive the principles of his religion were, on certain conditions, to be admitted as members of his Church, and thus in fellowship with himself, and with the rest of his followers, to be brought safely through the desert pilgrimage of the present life, to the eternal kingdom, of whose glory and brightness, of whose joys and delights, they should be made partakers after their departure from this world.

Jesus Christ must have designed that the truths of his religion should be taught, believed and practised in his Church, precisely as he taught them himself, without alteration or evasion; and consequently he must have intended that those who should, in the course of time, be added to the fellowship of his church, should believe precisely with the rest, and “in the bonds of christian peace preserve the unity of the christian spirit.”

The religious truths which Jesus Christ taught, and a knowledge of which, by the establishment of his church, he was desirous to propagate and spread over the whole world for the benefit of all men, were well defined and precise dogmas, and well ascertained moral principles, perfectly harmonizing with each other, and their nature incapable of change or improvement.

We need not undertake to prove these positions, because there is an evidence of their truth in their simple exposition, superior to the light of the best contrived and most forcible argumentation.

The world was ignorant of the religion of Christ until he came and taught it, and men could in his time, only learn it from himself; and since his time, they have been able to come to a knowledge of it, only by the aid of the church, which was established for the express purpose of teaching what he revealed. Hence, we find that all the nations of the earth, that have been fortunate enough at any time to pass from the darkness of Paganism into the admirable light of Christian Knowledge have done so under the guidance of the church established by Christ, which, like a faithful spouse, has presented them to her beloved as the children of her affection. Hence, also, those nations which have renounced allegiance to this church and refused to claim her as mother, have gradually relapsed into ignorance of Christian Truth, in proportion to the violence and perseverance of their rebellion, until some are becoming, with respect to the moral virtues and the Christian mysteries, but little superior to the very heathens.

As there are various sects in christendom now exhibiting claims to be the church of Christ, we often hear the inquiry, “which is the true church?”—“which is the church of Christ?” But we marvel how any person, who is at all acquainted with the facts of history, can be the least puzzled to decide this question. Upon the records of the past may be seen the true titles

each of these pretenders, and God, in his mercy, has so disposed events, that to the honest inquirer there is superabundant proof of the superior claims of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. We easily fix the origin of each of the sects at a period far posterior to the time of Christ, and thereby show, that if Christ established a church at all, none of these can, by possibility, be his church. We easily prove from the records of history, and from the progress of religious controversy, nay from the very admissions of the different sects, that the Catholic Church existed before them all; that these separated from her; that they protested against her; and thereby we show that if any existing church be the one which Christ established, it must be the Catholic Church. We do more, for we prove the continual existence of the Catholic Church from the very time of Christ and his Apostles, and thereby show that she is truly his Church.

Yet, it is a general tenet of religious opinion among Protestants, that the Catholic Church is “a false, superstitious, and even idolatrous Church,” and that, for the love of God, all true christians should regard her with hatred and aversion.

This tenet of religious opinion, ought to be considered as the only fundamental and clearly ascertained point of the protestant symbol, because it seems to be the only one not in dispute among protestants. Let us examine, for a moment, the *data* upon which this assumption against the Catholic Church is made.

First: Protestants take for granted that several of the doctrines and observances of the Catholic Church are false and superstitious. Assuming the doctrines to be false, they denounce the Church which teaches them. But, in response, the Catholic Church proves that these same doctrines have been taught by the Church, during preceding centuries, from the very time of Christ.

Secondly: Protestants, finding this to be true, assume that the Church, very soon after the time of Christ, fell into error, superstition, and idolatry: in a word, that “it fell into popery.”

Thirdly: When asked, where was the Church of Christ during the ages when the Catholic Church was the only visible Christian Church, they assume that the Church of Christ was, during all that time, invisible.

Fourthly: They assume that it became again visible in the person of Luther and his followers, in the sixteenth century, and is now visible in the heterogeneous sects, who are disturbing christendom, with their clamorous disputations and contradictory gospel schemes and theories.

Upon these liberal and perfectly gratuitous assumptions, is based that harmonious and concordant hostility to the Catholic Church, which as we before remarked, is the only point upon which Protestants present a semblance of agreement.

(To be Continued.)