

REMITTANCES

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THE TRUE WITNESS AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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THE POPE'S "DEPOSING POWER."

In reply to several queries that have been put to us—as to whether the Pope has the right, or the power, *proprio motu*, of his own good will and pleasure, to depose sovereigns, thus releasing their subjects from their allegiance, and assigning their dominions to another—we reply:—

I. That the Pope has no more right, or legal power, to do wrong, or to authorise the doing of wrong, than has any other man.

II. That the Pope therefore has no right, or legal power, to release subjects from the duty, or allegiance, which they owe to their sovereigns. For the Pope has not the right, or legal power, to permit any one to do wrong; and it is wrong to withhold from another that which is his due.

III. The "Deposing Power of the Popes" is not a doctrine, article of faith, or dogma, explicitly taught by the Catholic Church.

Having answered the questions put to us, we will offer a few remarks to the consideration of our querist—"Liberal Catholic." We suppose that he, in common with Catholics, and most Non-Catholics, will admit:—

I. That the duty of subjects to obey their rightful sovereign, is a moral and religious obligation; and that to violate it is sin—that is, an offence cognisable before the spiritual tribunal.

II. That the right of sovereigns over their subjects, is not absolute; and may be forfeited by the gross misconduct of the former. In other words—that cases may arise, in which the obedience of the subject to the sovereign would not be due; and in which, therefore, the subject would, *ipso facto*, not only be released from the obligation of obeying his commands, but, as a Christian, would be bound to disobey them.

III. That, the obligation of obedience being a moral and religious obligation, the question whether that obligation, in any particular case, be binding on the subject, or whether he be released from it, is a moral and religious question; which therefore can only be decided by an impartial and infallible judge—by a judge, infallible on all questions of faith and morals.

IV. That the individual subject cannot be an impartial judge in such a case, as he is an interested party; that he is not infallible on questions of faith and morals; and therefore cannot be a competent judge in the premises.

V. That the Sovereign Pontiff is an infallible judge on all questions of faith and morals—not indeed when speaking as a private Doctor—but when, as Christ's Vicar upon earth, he addresses the Universal Church, from the Chair of Peter.

VI. That the Sovereign Pontiff, therefore, in virtue of his infallibility on questions of faith and morals, is competent to pronounce judgment when, and under what circumstances, the subject is released from the duty of obeying the commands of the sovereign, and is bound to disobey them.

VII. That the sovereign, whose subjects are not bound to obey, or are bound to disobey, him, is virtually "Deposed" from his sovereignty.

To evade the force of this argument, our friend must assert:—

Either—that the right of sovereigns over their subjects is absolute, and that, under all circumstances, the latter are bound to submit to them;

Or, that the individual subject is the sole judge as to whether his obedience is due to, or may rightfully be withheld from, his temporal sovereign.

Or else he must deny that the Sovereign Pontiff, when addressing the Universal Church from the Chair of Peter, is an infallible judge on questions of faith and morals.

If he asserts the first—"the absolute right of sovereigns"—he proclaims the right of despotism.

If the second—of anarchy.

And if the third—he is most certainly not a Catholic, either "Liberal" or "Illiberal."

Of God only, as Creator, can *right*, in the strict sense of the word—"absolute right," which of course implies the *duty* on the part of all God's creatures, of unconditional obedience—be predicated. Man has rights over man, only in that, and in so far as, he has also duties towards man; and if he violates the latter, he forfeits the former. This all Protestants must admit—or how can they defend their conduct towards the Stuarts in England, or the promoters of the American Revolution? The only question then is—as to who is the proper judge as to whether the sovereign has by his conduct violated his duties towards, and therefore forfeited his rights over, the subject. Not the former certainly; for a judge to be competent must be impartial, and disinterested.—

But the sovereign is an immediately interested party, as is also the subject; therefore neither sovereign nor subject can be a competent judge. Protestantism therefore which rejects the Sovereign Pontiff as judge, has no means, save brute force, of deciding the question; and thus it is, that all countries which have thrown off their allegiance to the See of Peter, have continually oscillated betwixt despotism and anarchy; at one moment proclaiming the "Divine Right of Kings"—at another, the "Divine Right of Peoples," and the "Right of Revolution." The Catholic, on the other hand—and this it is which has drawn down upon him the reproach of disloyalty and of a divided allegiance—recognises, neither in Kings nor People, a Divine Right to do wrong. He abhors the modern doctrine of the "Right of Revolution," it is true;—but he is equally far from approving the slavish principles of the defenders of "Right Divine" in sovereigns. Conscious however of his own infallibility, he presumes not of himself to decide when, and under what circumstances, he is at liberty, or in duty bound, to refuse obedience to his temporal sovereign; though he well knows that such cases have arisen, and may therefore arise again. It is from God, and from Him alone, that the Catholic can obtain the knowledge requisite to decide in such a case; and this knowledge he seeks through the Divinely appointed channel—*z. e.*, Christ's Church. From her he learns his duty under all conceivable circumstances; and whilst he follows her instructions, and submits to her decisions, it is impossible that he can ever be other than an obedient and loyal subject, so long as the commands of his earthly sovereign militate not with those which he has received from Him Who is King of Kings.

Our friend is quite right in supposing, that the Church no where teaches, and has never taught, that "no faith is to be kept with heretics." Faith is to be kept with all men. But, it must be added, that no man can oblige himself, by oath or promise, to do that which is evil, or to abstain from doing that which is right—*e. g.*, to commit a murder, or not to love God. Such oaths, are not binding, under any possible circumstances, and impose no obligation upon him who takes them. It is from a misapprehension of this doctrine of the Church that has arisen the Protestant calumny, that Papists hold that "Faith is not to be kept with heretics."

In justice to the *Church Journal* of New York, we must admit that he has had the honesty—rare amongst Protestants—to confess and retract his erroneous definition of the Catholic dogma upon the "Conception of the Blessed Virgin"—that it made "her, equally with her Son to be pure by nature." Having twice pointed out to him that, in the words of the Sovereign Pontiff defining the dogma, the Blessed Virgin is declared to be "Immaculate" in her Conception:—

"By the special privilege and Grace of God, and in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ"—

and therefore, if pure "by Grace," not "by nature," the *Church Journal* now writes:—

"We cheerfully make the correction. We have the honesty to confess and retract our error. We did not make the error knowingly or wilfully, however; for, at the time of writing that article, we had not seen the wording of the definition itself."—*Church Journal*, May 10th.

We willingly admit the fact, as given by our cotemporary in explanation of his error; but whether it can be admitted as an excuse, is what we may be permitted to doubt. There is, we fear, little moral difference betwixt the guilt of him, who taxes his neighbor with that which he knows to be false, and of him who charges his neighbor with that which he does not know, and has no reason for believing, to be true. By his own showing, our Protestant cotemporary had not even "seen" the definition of the doctrine, at the time when he presumed to sit in judgment upon, and condemn it; holding it up to the reprobation of his fellow-Protestants, as anti-Christian and blasphemous. This conduct is so common amongst Protestants, when treating of Catholic doctrines, that it would be scarce worth noticing, were it not that the *Church Journal* adduces it as an argument in favor of his honesty. "I did not know that the Catholic Church taught otherwise"—is his excuse—"therefore I had the right to assure my hearers that she did not."—We recommend however our Protestant friend to be a little more cautious for the future; and to abstain from passing an opinion upon the teachings of the Church, until such time, at least, as he shall have obtained some little knowledge as to what they really are. This knowledge is easily acquired by him who is in earnest in his search after the truth; and we fear that we must attribute the crass ignorance so universal amongst Protestants, as to the doctrines of Catholicity, rather to a moral, than to any intellectual deficiency. If the *Church Journal* thinks this opinion harsh and uncharitable, let us ask him what judgment he himself would form of some rival Protestant sectary, who should attribute to Anglicans, doctrines which they expressly repudiate; and who, when detected and exposed, should seek to screen himself from the charge of dishonesty, by the plea, "that he had never seen the Anglican Liturgy and formularies?"

"We ought to have said"—adds our Protestant cotemporary, by way of further explanation—"that the new dogma makes the Blessed Virgin equally with her Divine Son to be pure in Nature."—*Church Journal*.

No, Sir-ree; you should have said no such thing; unless you had added, that—whilst the purity of her Divine Son was His own, the "new dogma" taught that the immaculate purity of the Mother was derived;—"a special Grace" accorded to her "in virtue of the merits of her Son Jesus Christ." In this sense the Mother is not "pure, equally with her Divine Son;" though indeed; as there can be no degrees of purity, though there may be of impurity—

as pure is pure, and cannot be purer than pure—it may, in another sense; be said that the human person Mary was a pure creature, and therefore pure in her nature, even as the Divine Person her Son was pure, in both the natures of which that Person was the *suppositum*. But why call the dogma of the purity of the Blessed Virgin Mother of God a "new dogma?" Do not Anglicans assert it—seeing that they have retained in their Liturgy, the old Catholic Collect for Christmas Day?—

"Almighty God who hast given us thy only begotten Son—to be born of a pure virgin."

Not the dogma which asserts the purity of the Blessed Virgin; but that which by implication seems to impute to her impurity—for all that is not perfectly pure is impure—is justly chargeable with novelty—as being "a new dogma."

This novelty, we do indeed find in the writings of modern Protestants. We have, for instance, in a lecture lately delivered before the Protestant Alliance of Toronto the "new dogma" of the impurity of the Mother of Our Lord clearly laid down as a Protestant article of Faith. The author boldly declares that "she was not Immaculate—that she was not a perpetual Virgin—that she was not the Mother of God—and that she was a sinner." From whence we must infer that the Person, of whom the person Mary was mother, was not God; and that she herself—far from having found favor with God, as full of Grace—must have been the object of the hatred and aversion of Him Whose eyes are too pure to behold iniquity. This is indeed a "new Protestant dogma." But the dogma, that the Blessed Mother of Christ was a "pure Virgin," is upwards of 1800 years old.

And yet, strange to say, the doctrine of the "Immaculate Conception" is one to which all Protestants should yield their assent. Protestants, for instance, who deny the Divine Personality of Christ, and the Atonement—and these old dogmas are rejected by the great majority of intelligent Protestants at the present day—are obliged also to reject the dogma of the transmission of "Original Sin." All men therefore are, according to them, "Conceived Immaculate;" and what they accord to all in general, they cannot refuse to the Virgin Mary in particular.

On the other hand, as will be seen from the following extract from the *Christian Inquirer*—a Protestant Unitarian paper—all Protestants who admit the Divine Personality of Jesus must, to be logically consistent, admit, the "Immaculate Conception" of the Mother of Jesus. This dogma, says our Protestant cotemporary, "is the direct, legitimate result," of proclaiming Christ, God—and he adds:—

"The worship of Mary, and the declaration of her sinlessness, are thus the direct and legitimate results of that doctrine of the Trinity, which, by making Jesus equal with God, leaves no Mediator between my God and me.

"The Roman Church accepts these legitimate results. The Protestant Church shrinks from them; and for fear of them recoils, in practice, from that view of the Trinity. In theory, almost every Protestant Church retains it. But in the practice of Protestantism, in its prayers, it prays to the Father; in its preaching, points to the example of the Son, as one tempted as we are—as that of the man Christ Jesus. Its Creeds are orthodox. Its practice, its devotions, its sermons, are heterodox. Thus, and thus only, do the strict churches of Protestantism escape the fatal conclusion of their Romanist brethren. They keep their Mediator, by a disregard of the creed which makes him God. And only so!"

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Anglo-Catholic.—Your communication received; but we do not deem it advisable to publish it; neither do we feel ourselves competent to resolve your doubts. Our advice to you is contained in Our Lord's injunction to the man healed of his leprosy—"Go: show thyself to the priest." From his lips seek counsel; and from the Throne of Grace, strength to help you in time of need.

At the same time you would do well to examine your conscience strictly; and to ask yourself these questions—"May not my doubts be but the aversion which the natural man ever feels to the things of God? May it not be that my heaviness arises—as in the case of the rich man mentioned in the Gospel—from my unwillingness to sacrifice all things, and follow Christ? Do not my scruples proceed, more from the fear of the worldly loss which must inevitably follow my conforming to Catholicity, than from any intellectual doubts as to its claims upon my obedience?" You would be a Catholic, and yet you shrink from the cost; you would follow Christ, yet you feel an almost insurmountable repugnance to the cross. Here, we think, we see the true secret of your doubts. Almost are you persuaded to be a Catholic. In that "almost" lies the whole mystery.

You say that—had you been born a Roman Catholic, you would have felt no doubt as to your duty of continuing in that communion; but that, God having been pleased to call you in the Anglican branch of His Church, you feel it your duty—until strong reasons to the contrary shall have been laid before you—to do your duty faithfully in that portion of his vineyard in which He has been pleased to place you. Such at least is the substance of the apology with which you seek to stifle the voice of conscience.

But are you not illogical? Would not the same process of reasoning lead to the conclusion that the Presbyterian should remain a Presbyterian—the Unitarian a Unitarian—and the Mormon a Mormon? Does not your logic imply the duty of every man to continue faithful to that religion in which he was born?

We have no intention at present of entering into controversy upon the subject. Permit us however to put to you one single question; which, when answered, must, if you consistently adhere to the ecclesiastical principles which you profess, settle the question at issue, and remove your doubts. You are, you say,

a Christian—a baptized Christian. To whom then—as to the Bishop of Montreal—is your spiritual allegiance due? This question settled—all the rest is plain.

You admit—so at least it seems to us—that there can be no true Church without a Bishop, with the right of spiritual jurisdiction. You admit, that, to the true Bishop of the Diocese, the spiritual allegiance of every baptized person in the said Diocese is due, under pain of exclusion from the true Church if withheld; out of which Church you also admit that there is no salvation. You admit likewise, that there cannot be two Bishops, both rightfully exercising spiritual jurisdiction, in the same Diocese. Carry out then these principles; apply them logically, and your doubts will speedily be resolved.

You are a citizen of Montreal; you are a Christian; and by your own admissions, your spiritual allegiance is due to the true Bishop of Montreal. There are two claimants to this title—Mgr. Bourget and Dr. Fulford; and the only question you have to settle, is—"Of these two claimants, which is the true Bishop of Montreal?" One must be; or there would be no true Bishop here, as no other person so much as pretends to exercise any spiritual jurisdiction in Montreal; and "no Bishop, no Church." Both cannot be; for there cannot be two persons both rightfully exercising spiritual jurisdiction in the same Diocese. To establish the claims of the one, all then that it is necessary to do, is to disprove the claims of the other.

No man can exercise a rightful power, unless it has been conferred by a competent authority; and no one can confer that which he does not possess. This we think that you will admit. You will likewise admit, that the spiritual is greater than the temporal; and that the less cannot contain the greater. If so, you must, perforce, admit that the temporal cannot, of itself, contain the spiritual; and therefore cannot confer any spiritual jurisdiction. Apply these principles, to the claims of Dr. Fulford to be rightfully invested with spiritual jurisdiction as Bishop of the Diocese of Montreal. From whom does he derive this spiritual jurisdiction? From the temporal power only; nominally, from the Queen of Great Britain; virtually from the British Ministry for the time being, which again is determined by the majority in the British House of Commons. But neither Queen, nor Lords and Commons—collectively or separately—are possessed of any rightful spiritual authority; and cannot therefore confer any rightful spiritual jurisdiction whatever—for no one can confer that which he does not possess. Therefore Dr. Fulford has no rightful spiritual jurisdiction, and no rightful claim to the spiritual allegiance of any baptised person, in Montreal; therefore he is not the true Bishop of Montreal. But if he is not, then Mgr. Bourget is; and therefore—in the last place—your spiritual allegiance is due to Mgr. Bourget, and cannot be by you withheld from him, without your perilling your eternal salvation.

You cannot retort upon us our own argument—that Mgr. Bourget cannot be Bishop of Montreal, because deriving his right of jurisdiction from a source incompetent to confer any spiritual jurisdiction whatsoever; and that therefore Dr. Fulford is. You may deny the right of the Sovereign Pontiff to confer spiritual jurisdiction; but you cannot, from principles which you held in common with us, disprove the existence of the said right. You however must, perforce—or your whole "Church" fabric will come tumbling about your ears—you must admit the incompetence of the mere temporal to confer the spiritual; and you cannot therefore reject our conclusion, of the incompetence of the British temporal sovereign, to confer any valid spiritual jurisdiction whatsoever, or whosoever. You must admit also, that the Pope is more than a mere temporal sovereign; and therefore the argument of incompetence to confer the spiritual, because a mere temporal sovereign, does not apply to him. You may say indeed that his spiritual authority does not extend beyond his temporal dominions; but if you do, you will have to explain how his temporal dominions—which are determined and limited by geographical and political accidents—can limit his spiritual authority. Is the spiritual then, limited and determined by the temporal?

Besides, it is not as sovereign of the Papal States, but as a Bishop—as a spiritual potentate—as successor of St. Peter the Prince of the Apostles—that the Pope claims, and exercises, his spiritual authority; which would remain precisely the same were his temporal dominions to be reduced by one-half tomorrow; or even were they to be utterly confiscated, and he himself driven into exile. With, or without, his temporalities, the spiritual authority of the Pope remains the same. Not so with the British sovereign; whose pretended spiritual authority is derived from, and must fall with the loss of, his temporalities. Of such an authority it may indeed be said, that it is limited by the temporal, because it is a political accident, and nothing more. Yet we see that even British sovereigns hesitate not to exercise their spiritual authority far beyond the limits of their temporal dominions—as may be seen by the following extract from the *Tablet*, which we recommend to our friend's attention:—

"The *Times* of Wednesday contained the following notice:—

"On the 8th ult., at the Church of Mount Zion, by the Bishop of Jerusalem, the Rev. P. Grant Brown, Missionary to the Jews in Alexandria, and son of the Rev. R. Brown, L.L.D., to Susannah Frances, third daughter of Robert Crawford, Esq., of Bath."

"Considering John Bull's wrath in 1850, because the Successor of St. Peter who appointed the English Hierarchy chances to be also a foreign sovereign, there is something amusing in this notice, which must have been sent by some of the distinguished ecclesiastics concerned." Mr. Gobat, it seems, is "Bishop of Jerusalem" by the spiritual authority of Queen Victoria. The English reformers stiffly maintained, that the right of any Bishop or clergyman to officiate in any particular country (*z. e.*, his jurisdiction) is derived