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THE CATHOLIC RECORD

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.

CLL.

If it is lawful to hold a Protestant creed, it is of course lawful to propagate it. Catholics will not acknowledge the objective lawfulness of either, but they will acknowledge that, subjectively, both may be right.

However, one thing is never lawful, objectively or subjectively, namely, the propagation of a creed by means of lies. Protestants are continually charging Catholic missionaries with extreme disingenuousness in their ways of propagandism. I can only say that if they are more disingenuous than certain Protestant agents and societies in Catholic countries, they must be very extraordinary men.

There are several ways in which dishonesty may be shown in Protestant propagandism among Catholics. Of course the principal is, dishonesty in grossly misrepresenting fundamental Roman Catholic doctrine and discipline. I have repeatedly given instances of this already, and have others yet to give.

Another chief form of dishonesty lies, not in misrepresenting Catholic doctrine, but in giving false accounts of Protestant successes among Catholics. The most notorious instance of this, one to which I am persuaded there is hardly a parallel, is naturally found in Dr. Saackpole's account of the Methodist mission in Italy, of which he was a principal member for more than four years. His charges are distinct and particular, and so grave that if false they ought to have led to his deposition. He has not been tried or deposed, and the plain inference is, that nothing has been said because nothing could be said.

Dr. Saackpole does not bring accusations of vice, but he does bring them of exaggerations so gross as to border closely on imposture. Says he, speaking of his first visit to their church in France: "At this time it had two preachers, and the audience that Sunday was about sixty persons. The work was considered too severe for one pastor. Thus each pastor had one sermon and a so-called prayer meeting or meeting for Bible study each week. To lighten the labors of these two pastors they had a Bible woman paid \$240 per year. Her services were thought to render pastoral visitation quite unnecessary. One of these pastors received a salary of \$960 and house rent, and the other, a single man, received \$900." Adding sundry expenses, "we find that to hold an average congregation of seventy-five persons in Florence, the Missionary Society paid out about \$2,000. To be sure, the minutes report an average congregation of 150, but we can testify by repeated countings during four years that the average was not more than seventy-five. We once asked one of the preachers why he did not cut down the statistical report for the minutes to actual facts, and he replied, 'That would not please the presiding elder.'" Dr. Saackpole declares that this move was everywhere operative in the mission.

Unless it has been fundamentally altered, it was not amiss that the new Methodist Church at Rome should have been dedicated by that prince of shams, the late Bishop John P. Newman.

A Southern mission paper (not Methodist) said, some time back, that there was a report that the friends of Senhor Serpa Pinto, a Portuguese merchant who took his own life, had petitioned the Pope to forgive his sins, so that he might have Christian burial. See here, says the angry sheet, what this blasphemous Pope pretends to do! And yet are we to be restrained from missionary work in his dominions?

Assuredly, if the Pope makes such claims, it is high time that his people were converted. The editor never seems to think of making some commonplace inquires, by which he would learn that self-murder, done by a sane man, is held by all Catholics to be a mortal sin, and that no one ascribes to the Pope any authority within the realms of eternal we. If the act is one of madness, then it is no sin, and needs no forgiveness.

It is by no means improbable that the vicar-apostolic of Angola may have given an adverse decision upon the Merchant's Act, and that his friends thereupon appealed to the Pope, offering evidence to show that he was not in his right mind at the time of his death, and might therefore receive Christian burial. This perfectly regular and warrantable proceeding would then have been turned, not by any excusable ignorance, but by an ignorant voluntary and malignant, into the monstrous pretence that the Pope is supposed, by a mere word of authority, to be able to rescue a soul already finally condemned!

This eager editor, so solicitous to wile money out of his readers' pockets by imposing on the Pope blasphemies which the Pope abhors, has never thought it worth while to reflect that in the case of a very much more august personage than the Portuguese merchant the permissible limits of Catholic practice in such a case have been clearly marked out. Some twelve or fourteen years ago, we remember, the Archduke Rudolph, crown prince of the heart-broken Emperor and Empress, devoted children of the Church, would have rejoiced to have the Pope express his belief that the act was one of mere madness. Yet, as His Holiness had no power to ordain religions if it was truly an act of the will, so he knew that the decision must turn upon facts better known to the Austrian and Hungarian bishops than to himself. He therefore made no attempt to interfere with the judgment of each bishop in his own See. How the Austrian bishops mainly only one of the seven-teen or eighteen bishops suffered funeral Masses to be said in his diocese for the soul of the Archduke.

Here, then, in a case concerning one of the greatest of monarchies, we find the Supreme Pontiff remaining mute, restrained alike by the solemn impossibilities of doctrine, and by the disciplinary necessity of not appearing to away the scale of evidence by an inopportune interposition of sovereign writing such things go to Mexico or Brazil or Italy or Spain to draw on themselves the scorn of the Catholics by such exhibitions of blasphemous ignorance!

left them in the hope that they may die before help comes. There is but one way to avoid this fate, and that is by keeping one's self free from sin; by preserving ever a high standard of right and sticking to it. Don't get started on the downward track, for it is too easy to go on it, and the end is disastrous if you are not stopped. By the aid of prayer, with the help of the Sacraments, and all the other assistances which the Church provides and suggests, climb to the top of the mountain of perfection and reach heaven as your everlasting reward. Never turn your back on heaven to go down hill, lest when accounts are squared up at the last day your lot may fall with the unsuccessful ones.

OUR DUTY TO PROTESTANTS.

Our Protestant brethren may think that we are too rigorous and uncompromising in our discussion of doctrinal subjects. Let them once and for all be convinced that our severity springs from our desire to spread what we know to be eternal truth and from our profound concern for their salvation. As God sees and will judge us, this is our supreme motive. Are we irritated at a friend whose counsels, though severe, save us from ruin and death?

Possibly the most dangerous and simple course that a Catholic can take is that of flattering Protestants into the delusion that they are right in essentials and that their chances of salvation are at least equal to those of members of the true Church. Such teaching is not only false, but it is positively cruel. It does not gain Protestants and it loses weak Catholics. Then again, Protestants can stand the truth. They do not want any sugar-coated pills. If a man is in earnest about his soul he is prepared to hear and to do anything for its welfare.

Our Protestant readers believe in God, their Father and Maker, Who as the infinite wisdom and power created man a reasonable being for an end which must be God Himself; for man is superior to matter, and nature herself teaches that the higher is not made for the lower, but the lower for the higher.

IMITATION OF CHRIST.

Whosoever findeth Jesus, findeth a good treasure, yes, good above all goods. And he who loseth Jesus loseth exceedingly much, and more than if he lost the whole world. He is wretchedly poor, who liveth without Jesus; and he is exceedingly rich, who is well with Jesus.

It is a great art to know how to converse with Jesus; and to know how to keep Jesus is great wisdom. Be humble and peaceable, and Jesus will be with thee. Be devout and quiet, and Jesus will stay with thee.

Thou mayest quickly drive away Jesus and lose His grace, if thou inclinest after outward things. And if thou drive him away from thee and lose Him, to whom wilt thou fly and whom then wilt thou seek for thy friend?

The Living Faith. Long centuries have come and gone. The world has plunged forward through many revolutions. Almost all things are changed. Time moves, but eternity stands still, and thus amid perpetual change the faith, which is the representative of eternity on earth, remains and is at rest, and its unchangeableness is our repose.

The Bethlehem of that night has never passed away. It lives not only in the memory of faith, but in faith's actual realities as well. It lives a real, unbroken, unseparated life, not in history only or in art or in poetry or even in the energetic worship and hearts of the faithful, but in the worshipful reality of the Blessed Sacrament. Round Bethlehem, goes on the same world of beautiful devotion which surrounded the newborn Babe.

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