

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.

CLXXVI.

We are to consider the question, apropos of Dr. Foster's discussion: Has Rome two contradictory articles of faith concerning the visibility of the Church, or concerning the salvability of non-Catholics?

Dr. Foster treats it as the very substance of Roman doctrine, that the Church is essentially visible. Undoubtedly. Now comes the question: In what sense does she teach this? He shows no reason for assuming that she teaches it in any other sense than that which we find in the New Testament.

Foster will not dispute that Christ on earth established a visible brotherhood; that He meant it always to remain visible; that He received believers into it by a visible baptism, and directed that this rite of initiation should be maintained; that He has established a visible Eucharist, as a pledge and means of His fuller presence with His people, and of their fuller fellowship with each other; that He has commissioned visible leaders for it, and meant that it should always be thus visibly led.

He will hardly deny that when Our Lord says that the gates of Hades—that is, the forces of destruction, however acting—shall not prevail against His Church, He means His Church as a visible communion on earth. Foster certainly can not merely mean that Christ promises that, notwithstanding all adverse powers of evil, there shall always be on earth redeemed souls. These, taken as unrelated and, except by occasional accident, unconscious of each other, would assuredly not form a Church. At most, they would only form the yet hidden constituents of a future heavenly brotherhood.

However, Dr. Foster may say, this visible is distinct from the invisible Church, is only partially coincident with it. Now where in the New Testament do we find any mention of this invisible Church? I certainly can not call any to mind. Even those Corinthians who were guilty of gross moral faults, unchastity, intemperance, dishonesty, rapacity, are still addressed by St. Paul as brethren of the Church, that is, of Christ's real Church. He allows much for their rude moral notions, as having been just brought out of heathenism, but warns them that if, on fuller admonition, they still cling to these evil things, they will forfeit their membership, or if, through slackness of discipline in the brotherhood, they retain it, they will be shut out from the Jerusalem on high. Even the incestuous man he treats as being still a member of the Church, but directs that he shall be forthwith put out of it.

Then since the New Testament says nothing about two Churches, a visible and an invisible, why should Rome be required to acknowledge two? Surely, as the apostles know only the one Church of God, visible and manifest by outward profession on earth, gathering in members from among the Jews and the Gentiles, Rome ought to be allowed to speak as they speak. Protestants have no right to refuse her leave to realize at least this form of the apostolic succession. They should not scold her for being unapostolic, and then scold her for being apostolic, too. Luther, to be sure, berates her because she will not leave St. Paul and follow him, but Professor Foster, though perhaps not the absolute pattern and pearl of theological modesty, would certainly never put himself on an equality with Luther.

What, then, some will ask, are there not worthy and unworthy members of the Church? Beyond doubt, but worthy and unworthy are not equivalent to visible and invisible. They are all equally visible, although, if they persevere, will remain visible members to all eternity, while the unworthy, unless they repent, will at some time, or in eternity, cease to be even visible members. When Christ says that some branches of the vine, that is, of Himself, bear fruit and some do not, He certainly does not mean that there are two vines, a visible and an invisible, the latter having only living branches, and the former both living and dead. There is but one vine, and that visible in itself (though for a while withdrawn from earth), having branches, all of which are likewise visible, though not all living. The dead shoots will be at last shorn away, but at present they are just as really, though not as desirably, members of the vine as the living branches.

But may there not be times when a great part of the Church, or even the greater part, is dead, and only a small part spiritually alive and able to maintain Christian life only within itself? Have we not here the distinction of the visible and the invisible Church?

Now, first, this is not what Protestantians may by visible and invisible Church. She does not mean merely living and dead Church, but living and visible Church, having more or fewer dead members. Living souls that are not known as members are a later addition to the doctrine. So far as I can see, when you come to pin her down, this is what she means, and must mean. Certainly, in authentic Protestant use, visible and invisible are never meant to be equivalent to the contrast between life and death.

But although there may be times when ungodliness will so overspread the Church as to make it hard to find the living remnant, there are not two churches. Assume absolute spiritual death in any part, greater or less, and absolute apostasy is the result, and the living remnant would survive as the living and visible Church. However, we can not assume absolute spiritual death as really a possibility in the greater part of the Christian body. All those who disbelieve in Christ, and own it, even though they sacrilegiously approach the offices of the Church for liquor, tobacco, morphine and other drug habits are held in the same way as those who remain a genuine and reverent faith in Christ, however defective,

there is never absolute spiritual death. There always remains a possibility, a virtual certainty, of an eventual rush of spiritual life shooting out from the living centre. So it has been, times innumerable, in every part of the Christian body.

When shall we ever learn modesty from Elijah? This great prophet was certain that he was the only living member of Israel. Yet God advises him that the number of genuine children of Israel is seven thousand times as great as he supposes, for he seems to take no account except of the slaughtered prophets. When our Protestantism, above all our Puritanism, whether Arminian or Calvinistic, can cure itself of this deep-rooted spiritual disdainfulness, it will have a better right to praise itself as walking in it.

"Thy way the holy prophets wait." If a part of a man's body is absolutely and hopelessly paralyzed, the dead part really ceases to be of the body at all. If it is only so far paralyzed that life may yet return into it from the sound part, certainly this does not make two bodies, a living body, and the whole, regarded as a combination of life and death. This would be laughable, but it appears to be very much the Protestant doctrine of the difference between the visible and the invisible Church.

Dr. Foster, in view of my use of several similes, may remind me that similes do not go on all fours. Very true, and it might be well if Dr. Foster would remember this, too. He sneers at the Catholic comparison of the Church to the ark, because, says he, none were saved who were out of the ark, while various Catholic divines maintain that a certain number will be saved who are not in the Roman communion. It never seems to occur to him that those who use this comparison cannot fail to have in mind that all who were in the ark were saved, but that by no means all who are in the Church are saved. This alone ought to show him that the users of the simile know very well that although, like the Lord's parables, it is good for one purpose, yet, like the parables, it can not serve every purpose. He insists that Rome identifies visible and invisible membership. Then, since she certainly does not teach that visible membership infallibly saves, can he not see that she does not teach an absolute, but an approximate, identity? The Presbyterian Church, which publishes his book, has once published a foolish book by Mrs. Julia McNair Wright, which informs the astonished theological world that Rome teaches that every one dying in her communion is saved. The Presbyterian Church has the deep disgrace of this shameful ignorance, but Professor Foster knows better. Then, as he is bound to see at the very beginning that Rome does not wish her doctrine of visibility so pushed as to save every one who is in her visible communion, so she does not want it so pushed as to damn every body that is out of it. She sets it up for practical ends, and not to meet every incidental exception that might be taken to a formula intended to meet the nebulousness of early Protestantism.

CHARLES C. STARBUCK.

Andover, Mass.

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

DISCOURAGEMENT.

"The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." (Matt. xiii. 33.)

The progress of spiritual life is slow with most of us, my dear brethren. We go along day by day, and it seems as if we had advanced but little since the day we began. It seems to us as if we were still standing at the starting-place, and the goal as far as ever. The good resolutions which we made when we began to serve God are not forgotten, neither are they broken. But the same evil influences are all about us, tempting us and luring us on to commit sin again, as in the days of our wickedness—those sins which we renounced years ago, and which we have renounced many a time since. And the older we grow the fiercer, perhaps, become those temptations. We think it may be that now we ought to be free from them; that as we have stopped sinning, the desire, even involuntary, of sinning again ought to leave us. And because temptations continue we imagine that sin is within us and that we must purge it out. So we try to make a general confession. The result is not satisfactory, and we fret and worry and delude ourselves with the belief that we are wholly evil and that we have made no progress since we started. We have fallen into the error so common, especially among pious people, that conceit is sin.

The truth of the whole matter is this, summed up in a few words of Holy Scripture: "My son, when thou comest to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation."

God wishes us to purge our souls as well as to strengthen them, and He allows us to be tempted that we may have not only the merit of resistance, but also the strength which comes from repeatedly engaging in battle with the greater will be your experience in the battles to come; and the more victories you gain, the more easily will you gain those which God puts in your hand.

The whole man is to be purged and cleansed. Nothing undefiled can enter.

Liquor, Tobacco and Morphine Habits.

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Heaven. So if you have put yourself into the hands of God, you must let Him do with you what He pleases. He has His ways and means, and His ways are not your ways. So He allows Satan to tempt you as He allowed him to tempt St. Paul and Job, and indeed all His chosen ones. He has chosen you, and He asks you to be patient while He works out His purpose in your soul. Look, therefore, on the temptations with which you are beset as so many chances by which you may resist, and so advance. Indeed I would not bid you to ask anything else from God but grace to overcome. With each temptation that comes there comes a grace tenfold stronger. Give to God the number of genuine children of Israel is seven thousand times as great as he supposes, for he seems to take no account except of the slaughtered prophets. When our Protestantism, above all our Puritanism, whether Arminian or Calvinistic, can cure itself of this deep-rooted spiritual disdainfulness, it will have a better right to praise itself as walking in it.

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REFLECTIONS FOR AN ORDINARY CHRISTIAN.

Donus Caritas Est.

I.

The most awe-full of divine facts is the infinite goodness of God. Terrifying, because we must ultimately share it, not as recipient only but as actual exponents and reflectors of it. "Et dixit: Vocesque Dei." And I have said it; You areas God.

This is the condition of supernaturalization in the other life. Heaven without it were a mere "Nirvana." It absent, union with God would be a fiction. That absence makes, means and spell Hell.

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death.

If I dared to say that we must participate in it in kind, I would dare to say we must participate in extent—short of that transcendent reality which our lips stutter at when we say infinity.

Oh! human speech, how inadequate to intimate even; oh! human mind, how unequal even to reflect a minimized phantasm of the shadow of the Infinite Love! We may strain with titanic struggles to tear the ligaments that keep us tongue-tied, only to find our lips babble out at best the thoughts of a child.

And so we merely say, and let us at least kneelingly say: "God is Love."

II.

Lean over the heart of that woman grasping to her bosom her dying child—the fruit of her womb, the flesh of her body, the blood of her veins. Let the hot iron of her mother-love burn into the marrow of your bones; the sanity of her distress shrivel you to the very soul. Earth, life—I had said Heaven, but words are vain—she would give for love of it, with love for it, instantly, cheerfully, madly.

We have touched one bound, one horizon, of human affection: Mother-love. Speech fails, sense fails—there is nothing left but sobbing.

Then listen to the Voice that is saying: "And if a woman should forget her child, still will I not forget you."

There is no word of human tenderness, there is no thought within the conception of human capacity—there is naught earthly or created, that may, that can, that dare love, think love, feel love, like the Bridegroom of the Canticles, the eternal and infinite God.

III.

Sorrow, sufferings, trials; phrases of what we call life (and who knows that what we call pleasures, successes, satisfactions bear not the same label to angels' eyes?) are these not only excuses for new tenderer feelings from God? The limitations of His love may be hidden. Faith proclaims them. Sins atoned, averted; punishments commuted, glories won—directly, indirectly; soon, later; near by, afar off; for ourselves, our friends, our community, our race. Who spans God's reach; who measures His glance; who over-rides His purpose; who reads His Heart?

Time turns a few leaves of years. Thus yesterday, it is still to-day above. And has God changed? He loves. Did He not love then? Blinded by tears, then, we read the page away which now spells golden words, and always love. The purposes, the lights, the means, the results, can we know them; shall we judge them? Was anything left out that love should do?

Read. In the Book it is written: "My people, is there anything which I should have done and which I have not done?"

Close the Book. It is all the same: "God is Love."

IV.

He loves all. Ah! there it touches us those little lives are spelt in words, numbered by letters, limited by kin, nearness, service, reward, circumstances. He loves all. Terrific thought; that is what we shall have to learn and to do. "Vos estis Dei." You are as God's. No love, no godliness. No love; no Heaven. No love, no happiness. No love, no eternity.

He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

All or none: The man that wronged me. The man of intolerable deeds. The man with gross or vulgar habits. The man of poor and despicable circumstances.

The savage with incredible debasement. The sage with impossible arrogance. The neighbor with every angle set on edge to mine.

The stranger with no interest that ever linked to mine.

The human being in all his shapes and moods and moods and degrees of ignorance, selfishness; meanness; and injustice, cruelty, nastiness and obnoxiousness.

God loves all. We must learn to love. Have we

learnt in life? Can we learn in death? Shall we learn in a moment? Yet God said: "This is my commandment: That you love one another, as I have loved you."

Is it not so, that the most awe-inspiring truth is the infinite goodness of God, which we are called actively to share or forever to forswear.—The Catholic World.

COMPENSATION

Better to mourn our dead— Than never to know how sweet The living words of a saint Or the power of his feet: Better to mourn, I say, Than never to know the care Of such trusting souls. That God Himself sent there.

Better to mourn our dead— I say it though smiling tears— Than not to know the charm They trailed through our following years: For a heart from which love has fled Is nearer the grave, unkind, And a spirit is bound by a golden thread To the Master's pitying throne.

Better to mourn our dead— O ye who sorrow my fate, I pray you smile through your blinding tears, And in your sad eyes your heart, rejoice In me, who weep for our common fate. But ah! at what bitter cost, How dreary must be the heart of men Who are ever loved and lost (Ruth Ward Kahn in Boston Transcript.)

HOME

(PAUL KESTER IN McCLURE'S MAGAZINE)

I want to go home To the dull old town With the shaded streets And the open square And the hill Behind the grove, unkind, And the house I love And the path I know— I want to go home.

If I can't go back To the happy days, Yet I can live When their shadows lie Under the trees And over the grass— I want to be there, Where the joy was once, Oh, I want to go home, I want to go home.

IMITATION OF CHRIST.

The Internal Speech of Christ to a Painful Soul.

Thus saith thy Beloved: I am thy salvation, thy peace and thy life; abide in me, and thou shalt find peace. Let alone all transitory things, and seek things eternal.

What are all temporal things but deceit? and what will all things created avail thee, if thou be forsaken by thy Creator?

Cast off, then, all earthly things, and make thyself agreeable to thy Creator and faithful to Him, that so thou mayest attain to true happiness.

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