

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.

There are some assertions which are so bold, and so contemptuous of the facts of history, and of the authority of the greatest historians, that it is very difficult to answer them.

This is exemplified in the unreservedly bitter accusation which the Springfield Republican correspondent brings against the See of Rome, and which I have quoted in my last paper. I will repeat it, that we may have it distinctly before us.

"The Roman Church, for centuries, has been a concentration of the most dangerous and bloody power—the power over souls by religious conformity—in the hands of a few persons at Rome who have not scrupled to use their authority, from time to time, to promote war, protect assassination, persecute the weak and pardon the strong for their crimes when those crimes seemed to promise aid for the oppressor, and subsistence for the priests who helped maintain the oppression."

Now what is the meaning of these furious charges, taken in their aggregate and in their mutual dependence? Plainly this, that at some point in the history of Western Europe (doubtless, from his time, long before the Reformation), the Catholic Church ceased to be the chief embodiment of Christianity and of spiritual and moral good, and became the seat of a conspiracy for using every religious and civil force of Europe as the passive instrument of the ambition and cupidity "of a few persons at Rome."

These "few persons" he would have us believe, have agreed—whether explicitly or by mutual understanding is indifferent—to bend all the doctrines, sacraments, ceremonies, successions, of Catholic Christianity, which before them had been ingeniously serving their avowed purpose of advancing the Christian religion, into the passive and largely unconscious instruments of serving the diabolical selfishness "of a few persons at Rome."

That this conspiracy of evil might not fail, the successors in it have been insidiously chosen, this man would have us believe, from generation to generation out of those judged, by previous trials, likely to prove servicable members of this great confederacy of hell.

Let any one examine Janssen's presentation of the customary language of the Lutherans towards the Roman See in Luther's time and down to the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, and he will see how much this gentleman's way of speech resembles theirs, allowing of course, for the greater temperateness of style of a somewhat more refined age. To be sure, he does not, like Luther's disciples, choose twenty two sermons in turn to the papal chair, or consent to have any caricatures carried off bodily by the devil. Indeed, I no more suppose that he believes in the existence of Satan than he believes in the Divine authority of Christ. Yet, as we see, his animosity is so great against the Papacy that it is not to cost him a very much effort to people the Vatican with all the infernal princes of Milton's Pandemonium, each in his proper style and function.

Note, according to him, this diabolical conspiracy still subsists at Rome in full energy of purpose, although at present somewhat laimed in some of its agencies. He does not say that the Roman Church was once such a concentration of evil purpose, but that she "has been" this "for centuries." Plus ça change, plus ça change. It is just as much a servant of the devil as he would describe John XII. as having been, although I care say he would view the innocent Sixtus as a good soul put up, like various Popes before him, as a blind to cover the faces of the malignant conspirators behind.

Observe, the question is not, whether in nearly two thousand years of Catholic history, there have not been scandals, many and great. Who disputes it? The Christian Church is made up of men and women sinful even when sincere, and all of whom, assuredly, are not sincere. Hypocrisy and crime have never been kept out of any office or order, from the Apostolate down. Those timid souls who behave as if the tares were not ever growing with the wheat have justly incurred the decision of Pope Leo XIII., who says there are those who would hardly be willing to own that Judas betrayed his Master, or that Peter denied Him.

It has been computed (of course rather vaguely) that in the various parts of Christendom one hundred thousand men have sustained the supreme office of Bishop alone, the population of a great city. Give to this man now an approximate clairvoyant knowledge of Church history, and wish what delight may we not imagine him prowling about for patriotic goblets, dragging out for display one example after another of episcopal unworthiness! The thousands and tens of thousands of bishops who have honestly endeavored to discharge their office, and many of them illustriously, would be to him as if they were not. In this whole long letter, for instance, I can not find one allusion, however casual, to a Roman Catholic worthy. Positively, unless my eyes has slipped (and I do not think it has), the nearest approach to this is his mention of Lucretia Borgia, as "a beautiful nonentity," who, nevertheless, he praises for her piety and benevolence during the latter half of her

life. We can imagine what his feelings are towards the Catholic Church, when Lucretia Borgia is the nearest approach to a Catholic saint whom he can prevail on himself to mention!

There is a story told about Mr. Froude, which I dare say is substantially true, but which I have ventured to embellish a little. It is said that he was once in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, looking over documents bearing on the insurrection of 1611. At last, gathering up a pile of them, he handed them to the attendant, saying: "There, take these away. These give evidence mitigating the crimes of the Irish Papists, and I am here to find evidence aggravating them; I am the Devil's Advocate against them." Whether Froude said this or not, it sufficiently describes his way. Now this gentleman, intellectually, is the genuine half-brother of Froude. To be sure, he is so immensely inferior to him to be supposed of the full blood, and therefore is happily exempt from those occasional outbursts of involuntary admiration of the opposing side into which Froude's mental omniscience sometimes betrayed him. This gentleman is the Advocate Diaboli from beginning to end.

Let me again remind the reader that the question is not about the existence of scandals in Catholic history. Nine hundred years are a long time and Europe and South America are a great region, and some ages have been more, some very much less favorable to religion and morality. The brighter the light, the deeper the darkness. Sin in Christendom is more conscious, and therefore more aggravated than sin outside. Wickedness in a priest is more hateful than in a layman. These thoughts are common enough in Catholic theology, and these scandals are described in composed detail, by Catholic scholars, by Dr. Lingard, by Wetzer and Welte, by Dr. Pastor, and in a peculiar fulness by Cardinal Baronius.

Of course, by gloating on the worst aspects of Church history, and writing as if the endless instances of moral and religious excellence in Catholic annals did not exist, any one may easily make the Vatican, and indeed the whole Church, appear as if it were the appointed residence of Apollyon. That is the style of this writer. Yet, as we see, he is not content with this. He deliberately assures us that the Roman See has been for centuries—doubtless at least since Hildebrand, eight hundred and fifty years—an inextinguishable and scottled confederacy to violate all the principles of righteousness, and all the instincts of mercy for the one end of advancing the power and the vulgar pomp of a knot of evil men at Rome, continued by a secret and unhallowed succession. With somewhat more decency of speech, this is no less abominably slanderous than the incoherent brutalities of Luther and the still greater brutalities of his first followers.

Before examining this tissue of cant in detail, I will first consider how a Catholic of the same temper as this correspondent might, on his principles, deal with Protestantism.

CHARLES C. STARRBUCK, Andover, Mass.

HUMILITY.

THE MOST NECESSARY OF ALL THE VIRTUES, SAYS A RECLAIMED INFIDEL.

M. Francois Copepee, the distinguished French author, who for a time fell away from the faith, only to return filled with zeal for the spread of Catholic truth, to which work he has since devoted his rare talents, makes the following "confession": "I was brought up religiously, and after my first Communion I continued to fulfil my spiritual duties with innocent fervor for several years. It was owing, I frankly confess, to the passions of youth and to the dread of confessing certain faults that I gave up my pious habits. Many men who are in the same case will agree with me that what first drew them from religion was the severity with which they imposed on all with regard to the senses, and that it is only later that they seek from reason and science metaphysical arguments in favor of their lax lives. For me, at least, this is what occurred. I ceased to practice my religion from false shame, and all the evil came from this first fault against humility, which seems to me to be decidedly the most necessary of all the virtues. This step once taken, I could not fall in the journey of life to read many books, to hear many words and to see many examples, intended to convince me that nothing is more legitimate than for a man to obey his pride and sensuality, and I became very quickly almost utterly indifferent to all sentiment of religion. My case, as may be seen, was very commonplace. It was the desertion of a soldier, weary of discipline. I certainly did not hate the flag under which I had served. I only fled from it and forgot it. To-day, when I have found my faith once more, I ask myself whether, in fact, I ever quit my faith. In my writings a few rare pages—which I detest and renounce—can be found in which I speak of holy things with a foolish frivolity, sometimes with a culpable audacity; but not one word of blasphemy. . . . Yes, the more I consider it, the more I think that a little Christian faith always slumbered within my heart. There was no doubt a trace of it in the resignation with which I always accepted the trials of life."

On November 1, 1885, Leo XIII. addressed these words to the whole Catholic world: "The Church, it is true, deems it unlawful to place the various forms of divine worship on the same footing as the true religion. Still it does not on that account condemn those men, who, for the sake of securing some great good or preventing some great evil, allow by custom and usage each kind of religion to have its place in their respective states. Indeed, the Church is wont diligently to take care that no one shall be compelled against his will to embrace the Catholic faith; for, as St. Augustine wisely reminds us, man cannot believe otherwise than of his own free will."—Catholic Home,

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Second Sunday of Advent THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

The beautiful feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin being so near at hand, let us consider it this morning. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, then, my dear brethren, is simply this: that our Blessed Lady, though the offspring merely of human parents, like the rest of us, and naturally liable to inherit original sin from them as we have inherited it from ours, was nevertheless by the special providence and decree of God entirely preserved from it.

She was preserved from it entirely, I say. This may be understood in two ways. First, it was never in her. It was not taken from her at the first moment of her existence, as it has been taken from us at baptism; no, it was not taken from her, for it was not in her even at that first moment.

Secondly, she was entirely saved from its effects, not partly, as we have been. None of its consequences remained in her, as I have said they do in us. No, she was as if there had never been such a thing; except that God San willed that she should suffer together with Him, on account of its being in us.

Now, my brethren, I hope you all understand this; for a great deal of nonsense is talked about this matter, especially by Protestants, most of whom have not the least idea what is meant by the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Mother, and who yet object to it just as bitterly as if they did. They either confound it with her virginal method, in which they themselves believe and yet seem to object to our believing it, or they accuse us of saying that she was divine like her Son, our Lord. If they would only examine they would find that what the Church teaches is simply this: that our Lady is a creature of God like ourselves, having no existence at all before the time of her Immaculate Conception; but that she is a pure and perfect creature, the most pure and perfect that God has ever made; immaculate, that is to say, spotless; free from any stain or imperfection, especially from the fatal stain of original sin. And that the reason why God made her so was that she was to be His own mother, than which no higher dignity can be conceived.

If they object to this, let them do so; but let them at least know and say what they are objecting to. Let us hope that some Protestants, at least, will not object to this doctrine when they understand it. But perhaps some of them may say: "This is all very good, but what right has the Pope, or any one else at this late day, to make it a part of the Christian faith? And it may be that even some Catholics will find the same difficulty. I will answer this question now, though it is a little off of our present subject, on account of the prominence which has been given to it of late. The answer is simply this: The Pope has not added anything at all to the Christian faith in defining the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. He has no more done so than the Council of Nicea did in defining the doctrine of the Divinity of our Lord.

You remember, my brethren, perhaps, that from this council the Nicene Creed, which is said or sung at Mass, takes its name. It was called together to condemn the errors of some who maintained that our Lord was not truly God. And it solemnly defined that He was, very well; but that adding anything to the Christian faith? Of course not; it was simply declaring what the Christian faith was, to put an end to the doubts which were arising about it. That is plain enough, is it not? Now what was it that the Pope did in defining the Immaculate Conception? Exactly the same thing. He defined what the faith really was to put an end to doubts about it. The only difference was that those who opposed or doubted the Immaculate Conception of our Lady were not so much to blame as those who opposed or doubted the Divinity of our Lord, or even in many cases not at all to blame. It was not such a prominent part of the faith, and had been more obscured by time. But the action of the Pope and the council in the two cases was just the same.

A MANIFESTATION OF ANTI-CHRIST.

The Catholic Union and Times of Buffalo says: "Anti Christ, who never knows surcease of hatred of the Nazarene and the Church He established as His abiding representative on earth, continues to fame forth his hell-born enmity against the good, the holy and the true. He ever marshals his cohorts of evil against the imprishable Church baptized in the blood of Calvary. He never rests, never sleeps, never changes his malignant purpose to nullify the Church's mission by insulting God and enmeshing in his craftily wove web the redeemed children of men. . . . But in all the cohorts of Satan's ministering agents there is none so potent of evil as the pernicious literature that abounds at the present day. The vast majority of the books and pamphlets now issued from the press are conceived in hatred of the Catholic Church, brought forth in falsehood and circulated by fraud. The so-called histories to be found in the home and public libraries, when dealing with Catholic topics, teem with the gross falsehoods, as if they were penned by the very father of lies. And when this is not the case, suppression of truth and suggestion of falsehood does the misleading work of the devil in more cowardly fashion."

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RESIGNATION

There is need for courage amidst the dangers and conflicts of life, but there is need and greater need of resignation with which to withstand the losses and the defeats which often attend them. Courage is for the moment while the danger is present or the conflict lasts; but resignation must be having till their misfortunes are retrieved or their consequences forgotten, which, in many cases, is never. A man is said to be great in danger and good in victory, but he is greatest and grandest when he triumphs over self and refuses to be himself by the disappointments and defeats which he has encountered, no matter how often they have come or how lasting their consequences. Resignation is not the stolidity of the bass and the unfeeling like the African slave or the lowly Arab of the desert, which nothing can move, but it is a Christian virtue, based on the higher hopes in God which makes a man strong to abide the ills and trials of life in the expectation he has that has that for bearing them resignedly he will one day enjoy the happiness and glory of heaven.

Such was the resolution of the first professors and teachers of the Christian faith, the apostles who, while lay down their lives counted it gain to die for Christ. But it is not given every one to meet great dangers, or to triumph over them, or to be overcome by them as war, and for most men it is in the little trials and worries and difficulties, the ordinary temptations and trials, that life's battles must be fought, and the necessary resignation must be practiced as often as we are overcome by them. Resignation is the gift of God's grace. One may philosophize upon misfortunes and for a while, and long while in some cases, may be able to bear up against the depression they prompt. But if they continue a long while and increase as they last, poor nature, unsubstantiated by grace, gradually succumbs, as we have seen in the case of Socrates and many pagan philosophers, and as we see in the everyday life around us in those who have not the sustaining power of the Christian faith, nor know the consolations and comforts of religion. Evils long borne crush many a life that bears them out.

It is the true Christian belief that no trial which God sends or permits need ever overcome one providing such an one has his heart and his hopes in God. Material things may go against such an one, as, for example, his business may fail, or of his wealth he may be deprived; health may go from him and death may come for him, or those he has loved. He may, like Job, be crushed to the earth with dire misfortunes, or, like Socrates, be wrongfully accused, but, like St. Paul, "Neither stripes, nor persecutions, nor calamity, nor any, nor all these things, will ever separate him from the love of Christ." In a word, he will not lose faith in God, but will, like St. Paul, console himself with the thought "that virtue is perfected by trial," and say, "he burn, he cut, but spare, O, spare in eternity!" And, like Job, even if all should be lost—family, friends, fortune—he would still be resigned and say, "God gave and God took away; and even should the miseries and misfortunes of life threaten to annihilate him, he would still be undaunted and invincible and like that hero of submission to the divine will exclaim: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, any my crown will not be wanting in eternity."

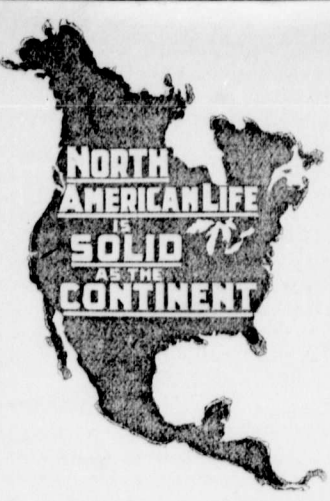
Resignation, Christian resignation, is nothing more nor less than conformity with the will of God. It is based on a faith in His goodness and on hope in His justice, and it finds its life in loving Him, even in the greatest crosses that it is called upon to carry, and kisses the divine hand that smites it. With such a one God is always good, and he never ceases to praise Him, and he says: "God is good when He gives, wise when He denies, The crosses from His hands are but blessings in disguise."

Our Divine Lord, Who has taught us all things that lead to eternal life, has taught and exemplified the duty of doing and abiding with the holy will of God. In the beautiful prayer He composed for our instruction saying this was should you pray. He said, speaking of the will of God, we should say: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And this perfection of His perfect yielding to the will of His Father has been shown us by St. Paul, who said of our divine Lord that He was "obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross." This, we know, was shown us by our Lord Himself, for when overcome with a bloody sweat at the thought of the persecution and crucifixion He was called upon to undergo and poor nature weakening at the ordeal, He exclaimed, "Father, if it is possible, let this chalice, pass away from me." He added these resolute and resigned words, "Not my will, but thine be done."

Let us be resigned, or rather let us ask for the gift and grace of resignation always, for it is from God that this strength must come. We must have its spirit abiding with us always, for we know not when we will stand in need of it. We sooner or later find this life is but a vale of tears; that all is fleeting and unsatisfactory. We read that life's hopes are but phantoms, its pleasures false, its honors empty. We must then wait with firm trust and trusting hope in God, and love and adore Him always, no matter what comes for it here, waiting and hoping for heaven in the great hereafter.—Bishop Colton in Catholic Union and Times.

THE GODLESS WOMAN.

People instinctively shrink from the goddess woman, for the goddess woman is the one without heart and without affection. There is no light in her. There is no glory. Hers is a cold and rebellious spirit. She is discord in the sweetest harmonies of the universe. She is a wandering star; she is a motionless brook; she is a voiceless bird; the strings of her soul are never



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touching by the infinite hand; she knows nothing of the goodness, of the truth, of the beauty of God, and of those that love Him. Like the masculine woman, she has no place in the world.

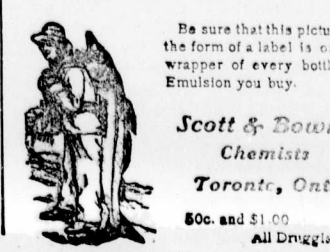
It would be a false conception to imagine that because a woman is not performing public functions, because she is not present in the glare of the footlights, because she is not engaged in making great history, that therefore her time is lost; that she is, as it were, an outcast from the providence of God and that her days are useless. If she be a good wife and a good mother, and a good sister, and a good daughter, if she help her father to bear his burdens, if she relieve her fading and failing mother, if she restrains her brothers from wicked associations, if she gather the forsaken around her knee in the moment of distress and press them to her heart and love them and make them feel that life is worth living, because here is a human heart that goes out to them, she may perform her mission in the world.—Rev. M. P. Dowling, S. J., in St. Xavier Calendar, Cinn.



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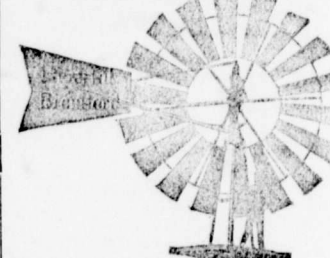
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