

OCTOBER 12, 1921.

RITUAL OF THE CHURCH.

Proof That It Is Sanctioned by the New Testament.

C. J. Armistead, in the September number of Truth, published at Nazareth, N. C., has a fine article on "The Ritual of the Catholic Church Sanctioned by the New Testament." He writes as follows:

In its broadest sense, ecclesiastical ritual embraces every means whatsoever of expressing, by the help of exterior material things, what is going on in the interior spiritual part of man's nature. It includes even so simple a thing as the expression of humility by bending the knee in prayer, or the manifestation of a spirit of thanksgiving by the singing of a hymn. Its essence consists in the use of visible or audible symbols of a belief or a feeling.

It is obvious that, without ritual of some sort, social worship is impossible. For a number of persons could not join at all in a common purpose to worship God together unless they had some outward symbol to express their united beliefs or feelings or desires.

Here then, as in so many other disputed points, the Catholic and the Protestant are one in their principles. The Protestant can not rightly object to the ritual worship of the Catholic on the ground that it undertakes to represent spiritual by material things, that it appeals to the senses, while the gospel is intended to appeal directly to the heart. For, as we have seen, he is obliged to do the same thing himself in his social worship.

But still he objects that the appeal to the senses is carried too far in the Catholic Church. He imagines that it is impossible for worship to be interior, spiritual and sincere when it is expressed to such an extent by the help of audible or visible symbols. And he quotes scripture in support of this belief. "God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."

AN APPEAL TO THE BIBLE. In fact he claims that it is in the Bible itself that the Church finds the model on which her system of ceremonial worship is built.

Now, in the first place, the text just quoted does not say one word about ritual, one way or another. It is the Christ simply foretold that men would worship God in spirit, that is, with the faith and hope and contrition of the soul; and in truth, that is, with a true knowledge of His nature and His will. How, then, do Protestants come to believe that this verse specifically condemns the ritual and ceremonies of Catholic worship?

The explanation is easy. They are taught from their childhood to believe that true spiritual worship requires a sort of mutilation or suppression of a part of man's nature, a shutting out of everything that can affect the senses.

The Catholic, on the contrary, believes that the New Testament clearly sanctions the principle of an appeal to the senses in order to awaken and to increase faith and hope, and all else that is meant by worship in spirit and in truth. For it offers far more striking examples of a ritual far more striking and impressive than is ever seen in a Catholic Church. We admit, indeed, that it does not give the details of any ritual appointed by Christ to be exactly followed by His Church. Nevertheless, we repeat, and we shall prove, that it fully sanctions the idea of arousing the soul to devotion and adoration by appeals to the senses, and gives repeated instances in which, for this very purpose, God Himself employed the sight and the hearing with a power of impression possible to His omnipotence alone.

But it will be objected at once that if God had desired, under the Christian dispensation, a ceremonial worship, the New Testament would have contained a divinely appointed ritual just as the Old Testament does. Not at all.

UNDER THE OLD DISPENSATION. The ritual was wholly prophetic. It symbolized future events, and therefore it could have been made appropriate by Him alone who foresaw those events. So to speak, God was obliged to arrange it Himself because no one else could have arranged them. But when prophecy became history, when the Church knew what facts and truths were to be symbolized in her worship, He left it to her to determine her own ritual, under the guidance of the spirit who was promised to lead her into all truth. And under that guidance she has taken the life of Christ Himself as her model.

But how can this possibly be true? asks the Protestant. Does the New Testament ever represent Jesus as man worshipping God, His Father, with any such pomp and ceremony as are seen in the Catholic Church? Why is it not by gentle persuasion and appeals to love and gratitude, rather than by magnificent displays of His power and glory, that He moved men to adore Him? Or do we read that any one ever worshipped Jesus Himself in any such way? Could anything be simpler, or freer from rite or ceremony than the manner in which He was approached and thanked and adored by those whom He had healed?

Those who ask these questions overlook the fact that Christ is presented to us in the gospels under a twofold aspect. In the one He is Himself a worshipper, in His human nature, of God the Father. But having become poor for our sakes He had naught wherewith to offer a costly or elaborate worship. A miracle was necessary

that He might have even the small sum He was required to pay as tribute to Caesar. But under the other aspect, He is Himself the object of divine worship. And it is to this aspect that we must turn if we would learn how God desires men to worship Him. For, remember, the ritual wherewith Jesus was worshipped was

ORDAINED BY GOD HIMSELF. And the Catholic believes that it was recorded in the Bible for this very purpose, that in it the Church might see the divine model of such a manner of worship as is pleasing to God.

But the one most striking feature of this God-ordained ritual, as it is described in the New Testament, is precisely its splendor and magnificence, its direct and overpowering appeal to the senses. In this respect nothing ever seen in the Catholic Church approaches it even afar off. Indeed she does not attempt to reproduce it, but only in her measure to imitate it. For she knows that her most elaborate and impressive ceremonies can never be to the magnificent ritual of the New Testament anything more than Millet's Angelus is to a real sunset.

But let us come to those occasions on which Jesus revealed His divinity in a special manner as the proper object of public worship. We shall compare the Bible account of what then occurred with what—shall we say it?—with what ought to have occurred, according to Protestant ideas of simplicity and spirituality of worship. The contrast will bring out clearly the truth that the Catholic principle of an impressive ceremonial worship is thoroughly in accord with the teachings of scripture.

In the first place, let us reflect on the ritual which God Himself appointed to be used in the first act of public worship ever offered to Jesus on earth. It is true that under one aspect nothing could be simpler or less magnificent than the surroundings of the spot where the human body of the divine infant was laid. But under another, nothing could be grander or more striking and impressive to the senses. People criticize the use of candles on the Catholic altar. But what is the brilliance of the light which shone from heaven upon Bethlehem? We hear complaints, too, of the

ELABORATE MUSIC OF THE MASS. But what are the grandest anthems ever heard in the Catholic church to the voices of the choir of angels which God sent to chant the first Gloria in Excelsis? We hear it asked also why the Church expends such vast sums in maintaining her splendid temples and her costly ceremonies. And yet the star in the heavens guided the Magi who came to lay their treasures at the feet of Jesus. Later in life, too, He commended the woman who poured on His head the box of costly ointment.

This is the divine proof for all time to those who complain that the Church wastes on her ceremonial pomp that which should be given to the poor, which should always remember that it is Jesus who first made this complaint, and that his motive was not a genuine compassion for the poor.

It is not plain, then, that those who object to the costliness and the splendor of the services of the Church are finding fault, not so much with her, as with God? According to their ideas, what ought to have been the manner of the first public adoration of Christ? It is hard to conceive what would have been, or how it could have been offered. Perhaps all that Mary's done would have been to take Mary's word for it that the Babe in the manger had been conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and then to have expressed their faith in Him as the Son of God by their acts of the mind, or of prayer, or of a few simple hymns of praise and thanksgiving. This would have been a good enough Protestant Christendom perhaps. But the Christmas drama in the Bible was evidently a thoroughly Catholic one. In it we heard the same Gloria in Excelsis which the Church now sings; in it a light was seen far brighter than any that ever illumines her sanctuaries; in it were used the same frankincense and myrrh that now exhaloes from the censers swung before her altars.

At the baptism of Christ we see the same impressive appeals to the senses, for the same purpose of

CREATING AND SUSTAINING FAITH. In Him as the true object of worship. The visible heavens were opened, and they who stood by saw the Holy Spirit descending upon Him in the form of a dove, and they heard a voice saying: "This is My beloved Son."

On one occasion He was pleased, by manifesting His majesty and glory, to elicit this adoration from His disciples. It was on Tabor. And here again we see that this act of divine worship was elicited by an appeal to the senses. A bright cloud overshadowed the mountain, and from it the disciples heard the voices of Moses and Elias talking with Him. The garments He wore, so plain and simple before, now glistered with a dazzling whiteness, and His countenance became like lightning. The effect upon the eye and the ear was so overpowering that Peter knew not what he said.

But is it credible that Jesus would deliberately have made these appeals to the senses, if He had known that they were calculated to prevent rather than to foster that spiritual worship which He desired? According to Protestant ideas, ought He not to have simply told His disciples that He was God, and to have asked only for that simple interior act of faith in Him, for a simple act of worship re-based upon that faith, without any re-based upon that faith, without any reliance upon sensible effects to elicit it? But the ritual at Bethlehem and at the Jordan, and on Tabor, culminated

on Calvary in a solemnly grandeur and impressiveness so great that to this day it cannot be even read of without exciting feelings of awe and reverence. And for what was it employed? What was the great design of the life and death of Jesus? It was to inspire in the human heart a sincere spiritual love and worship of God. But surely, according to Protestant ideas, He had done enough to secure this end, from men of good will at least, before He came to Calvary at all. He had distinctly declared Himself to be God; He had taught as never man had done before; He had shown more than a human knowledge of the hearts of men, and a more than human love for them—a truly divine compassion for their sorrows and sufferings. After all this, what more was needed to convince their faith and win their love than to die on the cross for them?

Yet in the sight of God another motive for faith was needed. It was not enough to appeal to the reason or THE GRATITUDE OF THE MULTITUDE who had come together to witness His death. Striking appeals must be made to the senses also. Many who were there had no doubt heard His wonderful discourses, and seen His mighty miracles. Some perhaps had been known by the touch of His hand, or knew those who had been thus healed. There were countless witnesses to His gentleness and pity and all embracing love and sympathy. But still this was not enough. The sun must be darkened, the earth must quake, and the dead must come forth from the graves to walk again among the living, before men would believe in Him and adore Him as God. The souls of the multitude on Calvary seemed to be dead; no appeal to the spiritual within them seemed able to create faith in the existence of an avenging God. It was not until they had seen the mighty portents of a darkened sun, a quaking earth, and the opening graves, that they began to strike their breasts in guilty sorrow, saying: "Truly this man was the Son of God."

We see then that the faith of the first disciples of God was not the result solely of impressions made directly upon their minds and hearts by the presentation of spiritual truths. It was the effect, in part, at least, of impressions made upon their bodily senses. But if God saw fit to employ such a method of originating Christian faith, is the Church wrong in using the same method for perpetuating that faith? Surely God knew better than non-Catholics do what was best calculated to inspire in the heart of man the feeling of true spiritual worship.

The Catholic Church is satisfied to have God on her side in this matter.

AUTHOR OF STABAT MATER. The author of the Stabat Mater is Jacopone da Todi, who lived in the thirteenth century. This remarkable man followed for many years the profession of lawyer at Todi, Italy, and it is said of him that he was worldly and very shrewd. His wife was an excellent plain lady, who in order to please her husband, would sometimes frequent social entertainments. On one of these occasions the seats collapsed and many of the ladies were crushed to death. Jacopone rushed to the assistance of his wife, who was among the mortally injured. To assist her in her agony, he loosened her dress and thereby discovered that she wore a pentagonal garb under her costly dress of silk. She died after a few minutes.

This accident changed Jacopone's worldly manner. To do penance was his only desire hereafter, and in order to suffer contempt, he played the part of a fool so successfully that when he asked to be admitted into a Franciscan convent the good friars refused to take him, believing him to be crazy. Then he wrote his immortal ode on the content of the world for vain glory. Thus his contemporaries in astonishment discovered his great mind and noble sanity and he could enter the novitiate of the Franciscan order. He was forbidden to make a fool of himself, although he retained his nickname Jacopone, which means "the fat Jacob." As a Franciscan, he lived a wonderful life of humiliation, mortification and penance. His love of Jesus increased daily. "Lord, my God, what art Thou and what art I?" was a frequent subject of his meditations during the night. Asked, "Do you want to suffer?" he said: "The sufferings of the whole world, of purgatory and hell."

And he had to suffer. One of his victims of his age, brought him into conflict with the authorities, and he was cast into prison. He submitted to it bravely with sincere cheerfulness, and for many years his food was bread and water, his habitation the gloomy prison cell. There was written the Stabat Mater, this beautiful hymn (sequence) to the Sorrowful Mother of Jesus, renowned for its deep conception, coming from the feeling, humble heart of the penitent Jacopone. The door of his prison opened for him in the year 1303, he was allowed to return to the Franciscans and died three years after—a holy death. His public veneration is attested by the Church. Jacopone wrote 19 satyres, 68 hymns, 40 odes and 9 sequences, the greatest of his work and wonderful flowers in the garden of poetry.—Church Progress.

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No Pope, no general or national council, no father or doctor of the Church, not one of her approved creeds, rituals or liturgies has ever used the term "Roman Catholic" as the official title of her religion, says the New Zealand Tablet. Its genuine official title is "the Holy Catholic Church," or "the One Holy Catholic Church," or "the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church." We claim the title "Catholic" as ours exclusively. No other creed or sect claims this exclusive right. At most, they would share the title with us. Fifteen hundred years ago St. Augustine—who was certainly a "Roman Catholic" and in full communion with the Holy See—made light of all such claims to partnership in the title "Catholic" in his book, "De Vera Religione." "We must," he writes, "hold the Christian religion and the communion of that Church which is Catholic, and is not only called so by her own children, but by all her enemies." The same great saint concludes as follows the statement of his reasons for remaining in the Catholic Church: "Lastly, the very name of Catholic holds me, of which this Church the possessor, not without reason, so that a stranger asks where the Catholics meet, not one of the heretics dare point out his own house or Church." A similar test was recommended by St. Cyril, who was Bishop of Jerusalem early in the fourth century. He tells the stranger in a strange city to "ask which is the Catholic Church, because," he adds, "this title belongs to our Holy Mother." The term was used by those two saints as a test to exclude those who were not in communion with the Holy See.

CUSTOM IS QUITE AGREED. It is the peculiar designation of the Church which has for its visible head on earth the Pope or Bishop who sits upon the chair of St. Peter in Rome. The very street arab finds only one meaning in the words of a stranger who inquires for the Catholic Church, the Catholic priest, the Catholic sisterhood. Standard English writers—we need only instance Lord Macaulay, Edmund Burke, James Martineau, Lecky—agree in using the word "Catholic" to designate the Church which is in communion with Rome. Lecky, when taken to task some years ago in Dublin for having used the word "Catholic" to designate members of the Papal Church, refused to employ the word "Roman Catholic," which he regarded as a sectarian in language. This noted Unionist and rationalistic historian cannot be suspected of any leaning toward our faith. But in all his learned and voluminous writings he habitually applies the term "Catholic Church" to that great religious organization which has its centre in the City of the Seven Hills. The great Encyclopedic Dictionary states that the word "Catholic" is by general usage applied to those in communion with the See of Rome—or, as its Protestant compliers put it, "the Roman Catholic branch of the Christian Church." Webster's great standard dictionary defines the term "Catholic" when standing by itself, as meaning "Roman Catholic." Briefly, the word "Catholic" means just what practically universal usage has decided that it shall mean. And that meaning is inseparably associated with what is officially known among us as "the Roman Catholic Church."

IN THE CONTINENTAL EUROPE. In the languages of continental Europe no term is known corresponding to the official designation of "Roman Catholic," by which we are known in English speaking countries. In French, Italian, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and other European languages the title "Catholic" is applied to, and only to, the Church of Rome. Were the word "Roman" added, it would be understood to mean the Catholicism holds good in the East. In his "Visit to the Russian Church," Rev. W. Palmer (Anglican) tells how, to his great annoyance, the "Orthodox" Russians persisted in calling the adherents of the Church of Rome "Catholics" pure and simple. The Russian Orthodox American Messenger—as in its issues of Jan. 1-13, 1898—does likewise. And the following paragraph appeared in the Catholic Times a few years ago from a correspondent resident in Cairo (Egypt): "In the East no one is called a Catholic if not in communion with Rome. If a man called himself an Anglican Catholic here he would be at once considered a 'Roman Catholic' from England. All churches united with Rome are called

Catholic, such as the Catholic Copis, Greek Catholics, Syrian Catholics and Latin Catholics. Those in schism are called Orthodox. The Anglicans are simply English Protestants."

No creed outside that of Roman obedience claims the exclusive right to the word "Catholic." When they apply it to themselves at all it supposes the acceptance of a "branch" theory or other form of Church polity, which is opposed to the words of the New Testament and contradicted by all ecclesiastical history and tradition. In the ordinary and long fixed usage of the words, the overwhelming body of Christian people understand by the designation "Catholic Church" the Church of Rome and no other.

THE WORD "ROMAN" is not used as an identifying prefix, and, therefore, outside legal formalities, its use is unnecessary. When Catholics employ the superfluous word "Roman" in reference to themselves, they do so either in accordance with official requirements or merely to emphasize the Roman headship of the Church. People outside our fold sometimes use the term "Roman" in this connection by way of denial that the Church in communion with the Pope is the one and only universal Church. Apart, therefore, from legal requirements, Catholics should ever call their Church by her unique and long-continued title, "the Catholic Church," and should avoid bestowing upon her a designation which is not our creation, and which is nowhere recognized in her official formulae.

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