

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.
COCXXX.

We have seen how the correspondent intimates that original Christianity was apparently "a reaction" of the poor and weak against the rich and strong. "Reaction" sounds a good deal like a polite equivalent for "conspiracy." We know that there are such conspiracies now, and, this gentleman might say why not then?

However, whatever Christianity might have been, it certainly was not in fact such a conspiracy. As Roman remarks, authority in the early Church was always thoroughly respectful to authority in the State. The Saviour once contemptuously styles the worthless Herod Antipas "that fox," but he moves no insurance against him, and mentions the Emperor only to enjoin civil obedience to him. Reverence to rulers is peremptorily commanded alike by St. Paul and St. Peter, and the injunction was strictly obeyed. Christian rebellions against the heathen Emperors were unknown. As Renan says, martyrdom was the one form of insurrection against the Empire until the early Church allowed for herself, and the finally victorious form.

Probably, therefore, our author does not use "reaction" to mean "conspiracy."

The early Church, however, while letting rank and wealth have their way in heathen society, might have been hidden within her own pale. It looks as if this gentleman might vaguely mean some such thing, if indeed he exactly knows what he does mean. High-sounding phrases are sometimes a convenient, particularly where they serve as a cover for a vague contemptuousness and dislike.

This gentleman has a good precedent in a much more distinguished man than himself. I remember that during Mr. Dana's life, the Sun once informed an inquirer that for the first century private property did not exist in the Church, but that all were supported out of a common fund. To be sure, this statement is ludicrously at variance with the information given us by the New Testament, especially by St. Luke in his Gospel and in the Acts, and by St. Paul. Witness this: "Charge them that are rich in this world," etc. But what of that? Humdrum study of the New Testament might be all very well for poor parsons, but it was plainly far below the dignity of such a man as Charles A. Dana. It was his prerogative to present the early Church, not as she was, but as it pleased him to construct her, "out of the depths of his moral consciousness." It suited his purpose that she should have been a monastic order "of the strict observance," and as such accordingly she must be made to appear. If facts were alleged in contradiction, Mr. Dana would doubtless have thought to himself: "So much the worse for the facts."

As a Boston newspaper said once upon some peculiar statements about Catholic matters: "Does any one really think that the President of Harvard University is obliged to revoke anything he has said at the cost of mere nobodies like Father Brennan or President Mullan?" The words were not quite so strong, and the names were left to be understood, but the substance of reasoning is there.

Mary's friend Leslie, when she was charged with murder by her husband, remarked: "Great prices are not to be called to account by common men for their little peculiarities of behavior." I suspect that this principle is held in honor much nearer to us than Edinburgh.

We have seen already that the Apostles themselves are addressed by Christ as of varying means, and that from the beginning (with a few rare exceptions) the Church left it to each man's conscience how much or how little of his own wealth he should keep in his own hands. Universal communisticness of soul is enjoined on all, and whoever lacks it is not a Christian, but the exercise of this brotherly liberality has never been placed under any imperious outward control.

Indeed, as the original stock of the Church was largely found in the mercantile classes, the complaint came up at last: "The Christians only are rich." As soon as Christians were allowed to build churches, they built handsome ones, to which they transferred much of the sumptuous adornment they had been accustomed to see in the private basilicas with the wealthier brethren had placed at their disposal. And, as Dr. Arnold observes, the exhortations to Bishops to be hospitable, imply that a Bishop was expected to be a man of substance. The overflowing wealth of the Christians was poured out unstintingly on the poor and sick, Christian or heathen, but it must have been there to pour out.

And as the Church did not forbid wealth, but only covetousness, so she did not forbid rank, but only pride. The Roman officer, when the Saviour extols as of greater faith than He had found in Israel, is not required by Him to give up his commission, nor is the Roman officer whom, first of the Gentiles, St. Peter receives into the Church. Erastus, the Corinthian brother, has the high office of Centurion of that wealthy city. St. Luke dedicates his two volumes to "His Excellency, Theophilus," doubtless governor of a province or city.

St. Paul, it is true, reminds the Corinthians that there were few nobles or philosophers among them. This implies that both nobility and high culture were found in the famous church, but not as numerous as would come to pass when the eyes of the world should be opened to the significance of Christianity. There is no sign, in the Acts or Epistles, of any indisposition of Christians to pay the usual deference to high station, within the Church or without.

St. Paul's remark upon the comparative infrequency of noble birth in the Church suffered a notable modification

at Rome. It is now known that the great families of the Acilii Glabrones and Pomponii Gracini—the latter allied with the still greater name of Plautius—were Christians. Indeed, the Gospel took a still higher flight. Clement the consul, the Emperor's cousin and colleague, was beheaded by Domitian as a Christian, and his wife Flavia Domitilla, the Emperor's niece, together with his own niece, Flavia Domitilla, was banished, and some say at last put to death. Sabinus, the Emperor's uncle, though not baptized, had been a pronounced adherent of the Church. Clement's two sons had been chosen by Domitian for his own successors. Thus, as Harnack remarks, we now know that before the end of the first century Christianity had been on the very verge of mounting the imperial throne.

Even after the deposition of the Flavian house we are able to trace a number of its Christian descendants, still in high office, principally in Egypt.

So fantastic is the notion that Christianity was a revolt against rank and wealth and the natural distinctions of society. It did, indeed, lift the mass of mankind to an essential dignity hardly known before, although vaguely anticipated by Stoicism. The citizenship of eternity casts paleness upon "life's poor distinctions." Yet, while it denounced pride, and covetousness, and oppressiveness, and earthliness of mind, it proclaimed no war against the social order, leaving the new spirit to modify this according to its essential nature.

This whole insinuation, therefore, that original Christianity was a league of some sort to bring the rich and powerful down from their terrestrial eminence, is a fanciful falsehood, the fruit either of malice or of ignorance. The mighty are reminded that recklessness in exalted place will be punished, but faithfulness in high place is to be rewarded with still higher.

However, as we go on, we find that the writer's malice is not directed here against the early Church, but against the later. He explicitly accuses the Roman Catholic Church of being now and of having been for centuries 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, protest 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.

Here we see the real of the writer in so unpropitiously exaggerating the unworldliness of the early Church into a monastic seclusion from all usual human distinctions and interests. It is that he may intensify his denunciation of the Catholic Church as a wholly different thing, a league for purely covetous and ambitious ends. Indeed, he does not even treat it as a league, but as the slavish subjection of countless millions to the selfish aims of "a few persons at Rome."

It is not that the author has not an unpropitiable hatred against Christianity itself, for his chief indictment against the Catholic Church, near the beginning of his letter, is that she maintains the Gospel to be destined to prevail throughout the world—a claim which assuredly Christians of every school have made from the beginning. However, he is willing to throw his hatred of early Christianity into the background, in order to direct the whole force of his virulence against the specific claims of the Roman See.

CHARLES C. STARRBUCK.
Andover, Mass.

FATHER KEELAN'S STORY.

(No. 2)

Written for The Catholic Standard and Times by Joseph L. Green.

"Father, can a priest never tell the secrets of the confessional?" queried little Rob Connelley of Father Keelan one evening late last August.

"No, my child," answered the priest, "not even to save his life. That reminds me of a story."

Before he could finish the sentence Rob gave a loud whoop of joy.

"Hey, you people!" he shouted to our party, who were separated on the lawn into groups of two and three. "Father Keelan's going to tell us a story."

However interesting our conversations might have been this announcement put an end to them all, for more quickly than words can tell we were all on the porch scrambling and pushing to get near to Father Keelan.

"First of all," said Father Keelan, when we were all settled, "I have never told this story before."

"Is it true?" asked little Bob.

"Yes, my child," answered the priest. "It was told to me by my principal character many years ago. There lived," he continued, "in a large city in the West, a wealthy merchant who had an only son Frank. The young man was sent to a fashionable college, where, unknown to his father, he fell in with bad companions. In a short time he became an habitual gambler."

"One day, while in desperate circumstances, he stole into his father's office, and, opening the safe, took several bills from the cash drawer."

"When the merchant, who had been out of town, returned to his office he missed the money. His confidential clerk was accused of the crime. The clerk protested his innocence, but to no avail. The safe had not been broken, and it was clearly the work of some one acquainted with the combination for opening it. This knowledge none but the merchant and his clerk possessed."

"On the strength of the evidence produced the clerk was found guilty in a court of justice and sentenced to several years imprisonment. Some years later a band of Jesuit missionaries were giving a mission at a prominent church in Cleveland. In the band was a Father T——, a brother to the young man who had been convicted of larceny."

"One evening whilst Father T—— was hearing confessions, a man entered

his box who had not been to confession for eight years. In the course of confession the priest learned that the sinner was the perpetrator of the crime for which his brother was suffering. He counseled the sinner to render justice to the innocent man, but he refused, asserting that he could never admit himself to be a thief."

"After the completion of his term in prison the priest's brother came forth a despised man. Whether he went the danger of scorn was pointed at him. Employment he sought everywhere, but was always refused. At last, weary and heartbroken, he died, the world believing him to have been a thief."

"Many years later I was one day called to the deathbed of an old man. It was whilst hearing his confession that I learned this story, and it is at its suggestion that I am now using it as an example of the secrecy of the confessional."

"So you can see from this," said Father Keelan, rising and turning to Bob, "that Father T—— could not make known that which he heard in the confessional, even to save the honor and life of one he loved. It has been so since the days of the Apostles, and with God's help it shall be so until the end of time."

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

First Sunday of Advent.

THE GRACES OF ADVENT.

This night is past, and the day is at hand. Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. (Epistle of the Day.)

T—J, dear brethren, we enter upon the season for preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ. For "the night is past and the day is at hand." "The day spring, the Brightness of the ever lasting Light, the Sun of righteousness," is come "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death."

To give light to them that have been unfaithful to God's grace, to call them back to turn them to a new life—this is the mission of our Saviour; and this is the call He makes upon us to-day—that we should return to Him, "the Ruler of the house of Israel, who didst appear to Moses in the burning bush, and gave him the law in Sinai."

You, dear brethren, were taught that law when the first rays of the light of reason lit up your soul. God wrote it on your hearts; you heard it from your parents' lips; your teachers made you love it and keep it. But have you done so? Have you not been like those who of old God taught, and who would not listen, but went after false gods, who bowed down before idols of gold and silver, of wood and clay?

Have you not bowed down like them when you preferred money getting to serving God; when you were willing for the sake of gold and silver, to risk the loss of your immortal souls? Have you not bowed down when you chose to gratify your lower instincts at the cost of your spiritual ruin? Have you not bowed down to idols of clay when you have steeped yourselves in drunkenness, in impurities, in the many sins of the flesh? Oh! surely you have need of the "wisdom that cometh out of the mouth of the Most High" to teach you "the way of prudence." Oh! surely you have need of "the Orient from on high," for you "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death."

But, dear brethren, "the night is past." Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness; "let us walk honestly." Oh! "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Behold Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver. He is for whom the nations sigh and their salvation has come to save us; to save men whom He has made from the dust of the earth.

Dear brethren, shall we be slow to go to Him who comes with healing for our immortal souls? Tell it out among the people, and say, "Behold, God our Saviour cometh. Emmanuel is His name, and His name is great. Behold, He is my God, and I will glorify Him; my Father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord our Lawgiver, the Lord our King, cometh to save us."

Begin this day to prepare for the joyous feast of Christmas. Cleanse your hearts by prayer and fasting; come to the sacraments and be washed in the blood of your Redeemer; come to His table and break the bread of true friendship, that the joy of your heart may be full when we shall celebrate that day of days when the Word which "was made flesh dwelt among us." Truly "He has seen His glory," and "of His fullness we have all received." Let us never forget His mercy; let us remember "that it is now this hour for us to rise from sleep."

IMPOSSIBLE MONKS.

"Educated non Catholics are beginning to appreciate the monk as a true worth, if we may judge from an advertisement of the publishers of the American Standard Revised Bible in the current issue of a magazine," says the Catholic News. "The advertisement has a picture of a mediaeval monk patiently making a copy of the Bible. Were it not for the monks of old the Scriptures would not have been preserved. But the printers of to-day do not seem to realize that truth. Their monks are impossible. Were these painters to be guided by facts they would give us more monks such as the one pictured in the Bible advertisement we refer to, and less—very much less—indeed—of the kind that look like brewers."

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"THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH"

[The following facts were given to a reporter of the Mirror by the rector of one of Baltimore's best known churches. These facts are vouched for by the Reverend Father as having come under his personal observation, and are published, despite their slightly sensational appearance, in the hope that by the moral to be deduced therefrom, some little good may be accomplished.—Ed.]

Our reporter called upon an old pastor of one of the city churches last week: "Well, Father, what is new in your parish?" "New," replied the pastor, "there is nothing new, as Solomon said many years ago. The life about a Catholic Church is about the same year in and year out. There are baptisms, marriages and funerals, the weekly devotions, and the monotonous round of visitors, who for the most part are trying to borrow money without security or to obtain money on their heart-rending appeals. It would be a noble work for one of our Catholic moneyed men to establish a bank where the impecunious could obtain money without security and without interest. Most pastors are generally credited among the borrowing people with having a bark upon this plan. But it is a mistake. They are always begging themselves. I have no parochial news to day, but I will relate a history which will show that God reigns in family affairs in this awfully progressive but unthinking age."

Take your pencil and write as I dictate," said the pastor, "for the story, the facts of which are as true as the Gospel, may do some good if published in your widely circulated journal. There are too many Catholics, who, imbibing the lax morality of the people among whom they live, persuade themselves that God's law may be violated with impunity, and too late they experience what St. Paul declares to be the inexorable rule: 'The wages of sin is death.'"

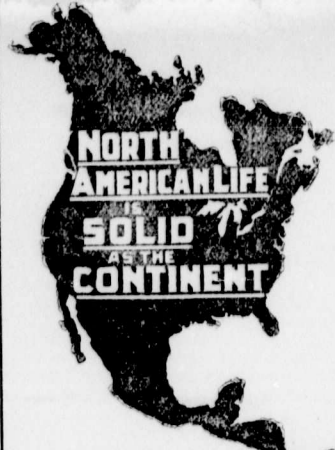
"One Sunday evening, some years ago, after a hard, busy day, I was reading in my study, when I was interrupted by the call of a young society man. He was over thirty years of age, and was successful in business. His family at that time were very prominent in the parish. Of course, I invited him into the study, and he declared the purpose of his call. He wanted to be married secretly during the week; he had made preparations for the event, the license was obtained by several months, had been obtained, and I promised to observe sacredly his wishes."

"The young woman was also of a highly respectable Catholic family, and I marvelled much that she should consent to a clandestine marriage. However, they were married and in due time the marriage was announced. After a few months of married life, both husband and wife became noticeably pious and devout. They were regularly in attendance at Mass and frequently at the Holy Table. Some time afterwards I met the young man on the street, and, inquiring after the health of his wife, I added, 'and of the baby.' He replied: 'My wife is well but I have no child.' How is that? 'Well, my wife and I feared a curious prying public, and we adopted means to silence their tongues! What! I am astounded, I said, walking away, shocked at the depth of wickedness in which these young people had plunged. It was the case of a first sin leading to a series of greater and more deadly sins."

"Now, for the sequel. The external law was broken; the penalty must be paid. A few months afterwards, I was engaged in the confessional, a rap at the door, and I was in the presence of the young man's sister! She was pale and panic-stricken. 'Come, Father, quickly, Henry's wife is dying!' she cried, amidst her tears. I hastened to the residence. The bride of eighteen months ago was surrounded by doctors and writhing in convulsions caused by the agony of pain. I begged them to give me a moment alone with the sick woman. As the door closed, she exclaimed: 'Oh, Father, I am suffering the just punishment of my crime. I consented to the death of my first child, and now I feel the anger of God is upon me, and I must die by the second. I had hoped to avert the punishment. I heard her confess, and administered the last sacraments, and prepared her to meet the great Judge who weighs all deeds in the balance of infinite justice. The doctors entered the room; their services were futile. In less than one-half an hour she was a corpse. The justice of God had operated the vindication of His admirable and all-wise laws."

"But there is a further sequel. The young widow broke up her habitation and went back once more to her paternal home. He was the chief cause of his wife's deadly sin. He, too, was to suffer his punishment, and time may be a fearful that it is an eternal one. After his wife's death he dropped the practice of his religious duties. There was no Mass on Sunday, no reception of the Sacraments, in fact in his life there was manifest no evidence of religion. What was the motive of his conduct the musician? God can alone decide. I met his mother on the street one morning, and she asked me to call to see her son, who had been suffering with a severe cold for several days. I called that same morning, and he appeared in no way to be dangerously ill. I spoke of confession to him, but as his request I consented to defer it to the next day. As I was leaving the house, three doctors drew up their teams and entered. I had hardly walked three blocks before a messenger summoned me back; he was dead—died, no doubt, in his sin. The doctors had found him fairly well, and adjourned to the parlor for consultation. After they left the room, the nurse perceived a sudden change, and quickly she called the family doctor—heart failure had sent his soul to judgment in the twinkling of an eye. In less than two years, this young couple in the heyday of their youth and strength had to answer at the bar of divine justice for their great sin."

"I relate this history, not for any other motive than to caution Catholics and our present civilization to remember that they are the children of God's predilection as the Hebrews were before the coming of Christ, our Lord. If, like these chosen people, they sin against His laws, they shall suffer punishment not only in this life, but in eternal life. Our Divine Lord has said to the Samaritans that salvation was for us is now of the Catholic Church. Osey her commandments, follow her teaching and thou shalt live not only in time, but in eternity."—Baltimore Mirror.



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ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND HIS PROTESTANT ADMIRERS.

The London Saturday Review (Oct. 14), commenting on a recently published book, "Homes of the First Francis," by Beryl D. de Solinoury, gives expression to some thoughts which are strikingly like those which Catholics entertain on the same subject. "We confess," says our London contemporary, "that we are getting not a little weary of the making of these many books on St. Francis, by people devoid of the scholarship, devoid of the understanding and imagination, which could bring them into real touch with the Middle Ages. St. Francis is in a measure responsible for this plague of books. He started a fanciful St. Francis which has taken the fancy of a host of people who revel in the phantasy of the Middle Ages, but have no stomach for its realities."

That is an excellent stroke. The sentimental admiration of St. Francis which Mr. Sabatier started, which is very popular with Mr. Sabatier's fellow Protestants, but which never gets any closer than admiration—never steps, for instance, from admiration to imitation—is something with which Catholics may be pardoned for having little sympathy. In fact, if we lose patience with it once in a while, it is hardly to be wondered at. St. Francis was a Catholic, a common sense Catholic, a faithful Catholic. Our Protestant friends who have, within the past few years, established a sort of rancorous cult, would make of the good saint a misty figure, stripped of all of his sturdy Catholic character.

But let us see what the London Saturday Review has to say further of the book under discussion. It praises the author for having hit upon a vital subject, and for diligence into topographical detail, but here, it says, "the limits of praise is almost reached."

"The style is weary, the treatment dreary, the scholarship lame and halting; while throughout, the book is marred and marred by the effort to present a St. Francis who shall be less offensive to modern susceptibilities than a real Roman saint of the Middle Ages. What can be the frame of mind of a writer who finds that St. Francis resembles a Protestant Reformer in his 'positive aspects,' who credits him with a 'boldness on the pathos which pervades the teaching of his Master Jesus,' who considers that 'the framing of a rule was in reality the death-blow of the Order?' (The rule was 'framed' by the Saint ere his twelfth companion had joined him, so that the Order on this theory may be said to be almost still born.) Five years ago this sort of thing might have provoked merely a passing smile, but to day nonsense about St. Francis comes in for review at a rate which makes it difficult for the reviewer to maintain equanimity."

Whoever in the wide world did as much for his dearest friends as Jesus crucified did for his bitterest enemies. It is this thought that is the missionary inspiration of many a heart, which beats quicker with love of souls while standing beneath the cross on Calvary.—The Missionary.

From the manner in which they use it, the impression is created that some people imagine the purpose of holy water at the church door is to sprinkle the floor.

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"Behold He Comes," (poetry), by Rev. T.J. Campbell S.J. (illustrated).

"The Lord's Anointed," by Grace Keen (illustrated).

"The De Profundis Bell," by Conrad Kummel (illustrated).

"The Great Simphon Tunnel," (illustrated) by "Two Killes," by Katharine Tynan Hinkson (illustrated).

"Marian Baras," (illustrated) 12 scenes in the Venetian Foundress's life.

"Mary Nolen's Silence," by Magdalen Rock, and "St. Anthony of Padua," (illustrated)—light scenes in the life of the Word Worker of Padua.

Saved by an Inspiration," (illustrated), by Chadwick.

"The Infant Mary," a brief account of the devotion to the Infant Mary (illustrated).