

"QUESTION BOX"

Father O'Connor in Philadelphia Catholic Standard and Times.

The "Excommunicated Comet" was the subject of Rev. Joseph V. O'Connor's discourse at St. Teresa's on Sunday evening, when this stock story of anti-Catholic lecturers and authors was thoroughly exposed.

If the number of patrons of the "question box" continues to increase, the lecturers will have to be abandoned or a separate might given to answers. If the questioners were continuous readers of the Catholic Standard and Times, the necessity of duplicating many answers would be avoided. Yet there is a respectable number even among the non-Catholic seekers of information who give evidence of having watched these columns for the replies.

"An American Catholic" who heartily endorsed the lecturer's methods of removing prejudice and bigotry asked no less than ten questions, which gave evidence of his having many Protestant friends, who were making him the mouthpiece for their objections or that he is one of those who do not intend to allow arguments against his Church to go unheeded when he can get the information. Condensed as much as possible the queries and answers were:

(1.) What is the difference between the Catholic and Protestant Bibles? If the Protestant Bible has the greater number of books, where did it get them? (2.) What difference is there between the Catholic and Protestant commandments? (3.) The Protestant "Lord's Prayer" ends with the words, "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever, Amen." Which is correct—the Catholic or Protestant version? (4.) Is the Bible inspired? Were all the books of the New Testament written by the followers of Christ—that is, were they always with Him, as were the Apostles? (5.) If the Bible is divinely inspired, how is it that one writer apparently contradicts another, even if the writers were, as some claim, uneducated men? Do the Hebrews believe all of the Old Testament as given in the Catholic Bible?

These questions are grouped together, because they are more or less intimately connected and relate to the Bible, directly or indirectly. (1.) The Catholic Bible contains the most books. Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch and I. and II. Maccabees are not in the Protestant Bible. (2.) There is practically no difference in the commandments, but merely in their division. All Protestants do not agree in the division. The Lutherans differ from the other sects. The Catholics, in making the worship of strange gods and images one commandment, have the weight of rabbinical tradition on their side and theirs is the only arrangement consistent with the Hebrew text as found in manuscripts.

(3.) The Protestant scholar Kennicott found the divisions to agree with the Catholic form in 460 out of 694 ancient manuscripts which he collated. The ninth and tenth commandments are, moreover, the sequence, as it were, of the sixth and seventh. The sixth forbids adultery, the ninth forbids the desire to commit this sin. The seventh forbids the stealing of our neighbor's goods, the tenth forbids our coveting them. (3.) The Lord's Prayer in the King James (Protestant) Bible appears both ways. In Luke xi., 2, 3, 4, you will find the Catholic form. In the revised Protestant version it appears only in the Greek text as found in manuscripts. The Protestant scholar Kennicott found the divisions to agree with the Catholic form in 460 out of 694 ancient manuscripts which he collated.

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happiness and gives him the means of salvation, but freedom to accept or reject it, can God be called unjust because that man, willfully and with open eyes, prefers damnation? If you warn a friend of a danger, and he persists in taking the risk, are you to blame because you foresaw the result of his act?

Nos. 7 and 8 deal with the question of "calls" and political topics for sermons among ministers, and are apparently echoes of an attempt by "American Catholic" to get back at his non-Catholic friends.

(9.) Are not holy water, blessed candles, etc., side issues in the Catholic Church, and do Catholics have to believe in them? Where does the priest obtain power to bless such articles?

These are sacramental and are used to excite piety. Objects to holy water might object to our Lord using clay on the eyes of the blind man to whom He restored sight.

"Patrick" could not see how the sacrament of baptism could enter any other Church than the Catholic. Baptism is so essential that the Church allows any one to baptize when a priest cannot be had, even if the baptized were a pagan or an atheist, providing his intention is to do that which the Catholic Church does—that is, baptize with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This naturally includes baptism which has been done with this intention by a minister, but to be secure it is usual with converts to give conditional baptism.

An Admirer of Lectures' objected to Bishop Burke's excommunication of those attending the wedding of a Catholic by a Protestant minister. He was told that the Church prescribes excommunication for certain acts of public scandal or open defiance. The Catholic who indulges in such excommunicates himself. According to the Protestant theory, marriage is a contract in which a priest, minister or magistrate is equally qualified to officiate, therefore the Protestant party to a mixed marriage sacrifices no principle by being married by a priest. With Catholics matrimony is a sacrament, and the Catholic married otherwise than by a priest commits sin. When the ceremony is accompanied by an ostentatious display, as in the case mentioned, the sin is public, therefore the act of the Church must be likewise.

Considering the enormous development of divorces among those outside the Church, the Church is compelled in the interests of society, if from no other motive, to put herself on record regarding the sanctity of marriage. "E. A. L." asked five questions. Two of them are embraced in the old catechism question, "Is it ever lawful to lie?"

The answer, of course, was in the catechism, "No." She was told, however, that it was not necessary to tell all you know, particularly when people ask questions they have no right to know and the answer to which may result in injury to others.

The third query told of a poor man who came to her house begging for something to eat, but refused soup and meat because it was Friday. At the same time she thought he had been drinking and she thought it would be better for the Church to forbid drink on Friday than meat.

The answer was that Catholics refrain from flesh meat on Fridays because our Lord died in the flesh on that day, and it is done in commemoration of Him. Where drink is an occasion of sin to a Catholic, he is bound to abstain from it any day, and he is commended for abstaining where he does it to avoid sin or to give example to others.

In her fourth query "E. A. L." told of a Catholic girl who once thought that the Church believes in ghosts and that people send sometimes for the priest to lay a ghost that troubles a house. Is not this superstitious? asks "E. A. L."

If you will turn to your New Testament, you will find that the Apostles, and who were pretty good Christians, thought our Saviour a spirit when He appeared among them after His resurrection, and that He did not chide them for their belief, but described a spirit as not having flesh and blood like Him. Thomas, if you remember also, put his hand in our Saviour's side before he was convinced. Our Lord Himself cast out evil spirits. That is what is called exorcising in the Catholic Church, which, whether in the matter of miracles or ghosts, exhausts every natural means of accounting for such phenomena. It is said that an Episcopal clergyman (supposedly Rev. Josiah V. Huntington) became a Catholic because of witnessing the "laying of a ghost" by a Catholic priest.

"Would it be wrong for a Protestant to ask a priest to say Mass for a deceased non-Catholic?" A priest can say Mass for a deceased non-Catholic and Catholics can pray for them, as they do. Because a man, dying in venial sin, does not believe in purgatory does not prevent him going there.

"George B." quotes the decision of a Judge, who said a legacy of money for souls in purgatory was void and asked: (1) "Does not the priest defraud people when he takes money to get souls out of purgatory?" The priest does not take money to get souls out of purgatory. He does not know whether the soul prayed for is there or not. When given an honorarium for that purpose or when promising to say a Mass, he must say it for the soul of the person named.

(2) "If God punishes us after death, is it right for us to evade it?"

The question should be: "Is it right for us to ask God to have mercy on the souls of our departed friends?" Christ Himself in the garden of Gethsemane asked the Father to permit the chalice of sorrow to pass by Him though He was suffering for our sins.

"Why did not the Church abolish indulgences because of the abuses of selling them?" Should the various offices in the gift of the people be abolished because they are sometimes bought and sold?

Amelia N., after imagining an impossible case of a girl in disguise deceiving a Bishop and being ordained, asked whether she should not be a priest.

The answer was "no." The priesthood requires that the recipient must be baptized and be a male. She would no more be ordained than one who makes a bad confession would be absolved.

"M." asked if a widower could become a priest or a widow a Sister. The answer was "Yes."

"M. M. C.," Jersey City, read an answer in the Catholic Standard and Times regarding a dispensation being more readily obtainable for a mixed marriage where the lady was advanced in years and plain looking. "M. M. C." could not understand the reason for this.

The Church recognizes the fact that one who is youthful and good looking has more opportunities of marriage than others, and is therefore less excusable in accepting a proposal from a non-Catholic. It is merely a question of degree in the circumstances which regulate the granting of a dispensation. The Church would rather see mixed marriages, yet there are cases where dispensations are necessary to save to the faith the Catholic party and his or her offspring.

"J. J. K." wished to know why the Church bothers about Catholics believing in dreams or in fortune tellers, and said he knew things to happen which were already dreamed about. Many dreams are merely the result of indigestion, and yet people are found who believe them supernatural. Of course visions have been granted to the saints and sometimes to others which were supernatural and had a significance. The Church bothers about it because many are led astray by dreams which can be accounted for by past happenings or by thoughts regarding the probability of future events. As to fortune telling, the places where fortunes are told are frequently masks for even greater iniquities, and girls especially who frequent them endanger their reputations. The Church in forbidding such things has the wisdom and experience of nearly two thousand years to guide her, and the experiences of the confessional alone supply her with an intimate knowledge of the diseases of the soul and the best methods of dealing with them.

"J. D." wanted to know "What is the use of a Catholic attending Mass if he gets drunk, steals and commits other sins?" This is not a result of his attending Mass, but rather of resisting the graces which flow from such attendance. However, our Lord, who came to save sinners and not the just, may yet save the sinner who still avoids another mortal sin, that is, failure to hear Mass. Bad as he may be, he would be even worse did he not attend Mass.

HOW THE REAL PRESENCE MAKES CONVERTS Our Eucharistic Lord wins souls in all ways, and often more than we may realize. He wins them miraculously. I remember the case of a young Protestant woman who was induced by a Catholic friend to attend vespers and benediction one Sunday at St. Paul's Church, New York City. After the service was over the Protestant girl said to the Catholic one: "Bring me the priest: I want to speak to him." And she said to him: "I know nothing of the Catholic religion, but while you were raising up that bright object in church it spoke to my soul and commanded me, like God, to join the Catholic Church." And so she was instructed, received, and in course of time became a religious.

I met a woman in California whose husband had at one time a bitter lawsuit with the Church about some property belonging to the old missions. Both were rank Protestants, she the daughter of a Methodist bishop. She chanced to wander idly into the Catholic Church one day, and sat down and rested, and enjoyed the quiet, for she was in deep distress. Soon she grew into the habit of daily spending some quiet minutes there, "just resting," she told me, "looking at the altar, wondering at the little sanctuary lamp, and at the peaceful devotion of the occasional worshippers, but deeply enjoying the calm serenity. And after some time I was in that manner converted: without reading a word or hearing a word of the Catholic doctrine, I became gradually influenced in its favor and then strongly certain of it. Of course, I afterwards went through a regular course of instruction, and since then have thoroughly studied the faith, but the Real Presence it was that actually converted me." Her husband and children joined the Church some time afterwards.

Who can tell how many converts are thus made by the Eucharistic Teacher of mankind? conscious as they may be, or unconscious, of His leading. It has been said that every religious error of modern times can be traced to misconception of the Incarnation. And it may be added that the Incarnation, the synthesis of all religious truth, can best be known by understanding the Eucharist. The Real Presence is not only the fountain of distribution for the divine favors in the Incarnation, but it is the focus of its light. It is not only the memorial of divine love, but it is the influence of the divine wisdom.

The Eucharist is the sum of the Christian religion. As the unregenerate soul asks of the missionary, "What have you to give me?" the perfect answer is, "I have Jesus Christ to give you, true God and true man, dwelling with your Catholic brethren under the appearance of bread and wine." And since, thanks be to a patient Providence, the vast majority of our separated brethren still hold fast to the Divinity of Christ, the Eucharist is a missionary coigne of vantage whose worth cannot be overestimated.

The personal love of Jesus is the substance of justification; it is the guarantee of perseverance; and the promise of it is the hope of heaven. The love of Christ is the supreme virtue, and therefore the means of getting to the supreme missionary topic. The Real Presence is that divinely generous outpouring of divine love, the very identical Christ Himself given us for the participation in the divine life. In the Eucharist the immediate union of the soul with God through Christ and in the Holy Ghost, is made as perfect as it can be before the beatific vision.

The Church of Christ was, in a certain sense, founded to give men Christ in the Eucharist. Every doctrinal belief leads souls to the altar. All ecclesiastical authority, whether to teach or to govern, is associated with the Eucharistic priesthood as its essential guardianship. If you call the Christian religion the Tree of Life, then the sap is the Eucharist, the bark is the society, the priesthood and laity are the fruits. The Real Presence makes the Church, and it also makes the priesthood and the laity, just as the sap of the tree makes its bark and its fruits.

The Church organism guards the Eucharist as the bark guards the sap; the Christian priesthood and people prove the Real Presence as the fruit proves the tree. The demonstration of divinity in Church authority as well as in the holy lives of the Church's children is but to show the living force of Christ—Christ living in us and in the Church as sap lives in a tree and gives it life. Not only is the Real Presence the supreme missionary dogma, but being the most difficult one to accept, its belief is the decisive victory of all controversy. Persuade a Protestant that his Catholic neighbors have Christ the Lord personally present in their church building, and what obstacle remains for faith to overcome? By such a soul the Roman dogma of authority, every way easier to believe than the Real Presence, will seem less than the Real Presence. On the other hand, the claims of Church authority are too often rejected because they are not accompanied by a full and clear demonstration of the Eucharist. History, reason, tradition, Scripture are well used, indeed, in showing that Christ founded a Church, and in pointing out the Church's divine marks of genuineness; but all evidences of religion should not be monopolized in proving the authority of the Church. The really black ignorance of non-Catholics is ignorance about the Real Presence. It is indispensable that we should proclaim to them: "There hath stood One in the midst of you whom you know not." Have you not noticed that when any sect sets up an altar and claims a priesthood it straightway calls itself Catholic? Any form of the Christian religion which claims an altar and a sacrifice ceases to be offensively individual, ceases to live on opposition, and is ashamed of being Protestant, and yearns for the Great Brotherhood. The Eucharist is the divinely given Pledge of Brotherhood—Love—itsself one of the most attractive themes for missionary preaching. Meanwhile, the Real Presence gives to true individualism all its wants, nay, more than was ever dreamed to be possible by most radical separatists. It reveals new spiritual appetites, and more than satisfies them. How little is known outside the Church of our personal Eucharistic Union with Christ and His God? If we were not over-anxious to comprehend the intellectual peace of Christ secured by the teaching Church, forgetting the peace of heart which passeth understanding, and which is given by the Eucharistic Church? The reason why there is faith in the world is because there is divine love to keep faith alive. Remember the concluding words of our Saviour's promise of the Real Presence. "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." As charity outranks faith and hope, so in the repository of the wise missionary does the Eucharistic dogma outrank all other dogmas. The presentation of Catholic truth without the Eucharistic dogma in supremacy, is like building a church without an altar, or like a church whose pulpit outshines the sanctuary. The Eucharistic home, the Eucharistic banquet, the Eucharistic man, the Eucharistic day—here are missionary forces whose undeveloped power awaits the champions of truth as newly discovered mines the labor of the engineer. Among our separated brethren are many who are already half-converts, and a large proportion of these hesitate to enter the Church because they do not properly know the Eucharist; they have never been clearly told what it means. Did we but publish in burning words the joy which is poured into our own souls at Mass and at Communion, fewer men and women would stop half way on the road to the Church. And, finally, let us ask, What makes a missionary? What quality is added to the ordinary Christian character, whether of priest or layman, that we may have a missionary? It is love of souls, zeal for souls. It is that love which utters the spontaneous cry, "Da mihi animas!" O, what a pattern for soul-lovers and soul-seekers in Jesus Christ in the Eucharist! He is content to be the Guest of souls, the Servant of souls, the food of souls! Persuasion is the divine gift of the missionary; but no man can persuade who does not love. The Sacrament of love and the school of love is the Eucharist. The Real Presence makes converts, not only because in it Christ works and His Father works for souls, but also because it makes missionaries. The sanctifying priest is the typical missionary priest, as the frequent communicant is the typical missionary layman. Such a one knows what missionary self-denial is because he is emptied of self and filled with Jesus. He knows what missionary eloquence is, for out of the fullness of his heart the words "speaketh—a heart filled with Jesus."—The Rev. Walter Elliot, in "Eucharistic Conferences."

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What for," said he. "For Henry Clay," was the answer. "I see the clay but I don't see Henry." "Man don't be foolish, take off your hat, it is the image of Henry Clay." "Look here, my good sir, you take off your hat to this statue which you say is the image of Henry Clay, and yet you laugh at me when I take off my hat to the Cross: what is the Cross but the image of Christ crucified?"

PAIN PAST ENDURANCE. G. W. Coon Helplessly Crippled with Rheumatism. COULD NOT RAISE EITHER HAND OR FOOT AND HAD TO BE FED AND DRESSED—THE DOCTORS TOLD HIM A CURE WAS IMPOSSIBLE, YET HE ATTENDS TO HIS BUSINESS TO DAY. From the Milbrook Reporter. Rheumatism has claimed many victims and has probably caused more pain than any other ill affecting mankind. Among those who have been its victims few have suffered more than Mr. G. W. Coon, now proprietor of a flourishing bakery in Hampton, but for a number of years a resident of Pontypool, when his severe illness occurred. To a reporter who interviewed him Mr. Coon gave the following particulars of his great suffering and ultimate cure: "Some seven or eight years ago," said Mr. Coon, "I felt a touch of rheumatism. At first I did not pay much attention to it, but as it was steadily growing worse I began to doctor for it, but to no effect. The trouble went from bad to worse, until three years after the first symptoms had manifested themselves I became almost past endurance and I got no more for myself than a young child. I could not lift my hands from my side, and my wife was obliged to cut my food and feed me when I felt like eating, which was not often considering the torture I was undergoing. My hands were swollen out of shape, and for weeks were tightly bandaged. My legs and feet were also swollen, and I could not lift my feet two inches from the floor. I could not change my clothes and my wife had to dress and wash me. I grew so thin that I looked more like a skeleton than anything else. The pain I suffered was almost past endurance and I got no more for myself than a young child. I could not lift my hands from my side, and my wife was obliged to cut my food and feed me when I felt like eating, which was not often considering the torture I was undergoing. 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