

The Catholic Register

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY AT  
119 WELLINGTON ST. WEST,  
TORONTO

Subscriptions: In City, including delivery, \$1.50; To all outside Canadian points, 1.60; In the States and Foreign, 1.75.

Approved and recommended by the Archbishop, Bishops and Clergy.

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—Pope Pius X.

TORONTO, NOV. 19TH, 1908.

CATHOLIC CHURCH EXTENSION.

About three short years ago the great missionary organization called "The Catholic Church Extension Society" was formed for the United States with Rev. Dr. Kelley at its head and Archbishop Quigley, of Chicago, its protector. In that short time it has grown to the dimensions of the greatest society in the American Church. Its plan of operation covers every phase of missionary endeavor, and its means of support is nothing more or less than the voluntary contributions of the favorably disposed. Its prime object is to secure churches, priests, literature and the means of decent and sufficient worship for all the struggling Catholics of the country; and this it has been accomplishing wonderfully under Divine Providence by arousing the missionary sense of the people.

Fifteen hundred churches already built or assisted; innumerable altars set up; sacred vestments and vessels provided; literature distributed and students forwarded on the missionary career, and the lifting of the Catholic Church of the United States to the proud position of a genuine and systematic provider of all necessities for Home Mission work. This is its record and all this in that short time.

The rich have sent in their thousands to have them systematically and impartially administered by Catholic Extension; the poor have contributed, with glad hearts, their humble mite for the same good object; all are entering into a sense of their obligations to the missionary efforts of the country, and the "Chapel on Wheels" circulating through the land, has greatly helped to bring about this blessed awakening.

The Church, ever ready to approve and bless disinterested and noble Catholic endeavor, early recognized and enriched the Extension Society, as the document from His Holiness published on the front page of this issue shows.

Canada needs Extension work even more than her sister country, and she must have it. In July of this year Canadian Catholic Extension, as an independent society, was organized, and since then has been advancing with rapid stride, the prominent men of the country freely giving it countenance, not only that, but large sums of their money for its organization and development. Its Board of Governors, a body which dispenses of all moneys collected, is headed by the Most Rev. Archbishop McEvay, and the Right Honorable Sir Charles Fitzpatrick, Chief Justice of the Dominion, is its first lay member, and manifests always a kind and loving interest in its work.

It has its head offices, as all now know, in the Register Building, 119 Wellington St., W., Toronto, and the paper itself is its official organ.

It is expected that every sympathizer of the cause will give tangible proof of this sympathy in some one of the numerous ways in which moneys are solicited for the Society's funds. At least every family can and will send in at once subscription to the Register and thus advance the cause apace. The paper will be more than worth its price, and besides, it will carry the story of the missionary enterprise to the ends of the land.

The missionary field is ready for the reaper. Few are the priests to be sent into it to-day. There are many young men in the country with religious vocations who should certainly volunteer for the work. The Lord Himself goes out at every hour to invite them into His Vineyard. Will they respond cheerfully and freely and thus secure their own happiness and save the souls of many? We believe they shall. Let them communicate with the President of the Society, Rev. Dr. Burke, at once, and he will

determine with them what is to be done and do it without delay.

In a short time the Extension Society will be prepared to receive and dispense not only the money contributions of the charitable, but, also, offerings for pioneer and indigent churches, either in money to buy them or vestments, chalices, altar equipments, and anything else which may be of service to these needy places. Those having such things on hand, or who intend contributing them through the Society, will intimate the same to the "Secretary Catholic Church Extension," 119 Wellington St., W., Toronto.

CHURCH UNION.

For several years past we have heard much of contemplated unions which have been declared to be on the point of being consummated between various Protestant sects, and these unions being once completed, we were assured that the standing reproach against the Protestant system as a whole would cease to have an object or a meaning, that it is a mere agglomeration of irreconcilable parts, none of which can claim to be the one Church which was instituted by Christ while He lived on earth, and which He commissioned to teach His saving truth to all nations.

It has been for years maintained, and not only for years, but for many generations, by the generality of Protestant controversial writers, that the unity required by Christ in His Church does not consist in subjection to one visible head on earth, nor in the firm belief of the same truths, even though they be revealed by God, nor in both these conditions combined, though they do require a belief in what they are pleased to regard as the principal mysteries of the Christian religion, while the minor or non-fundamental mysteries are free to be rejected or accepted as each individual Christian deems proper. Unity of the first kind they are accustomed to call uniformity, whereas the second kind of unity, they say, is all that is required to constitute Christian unity.

In this sense the Presbyterians now practically interpret their definition of the Church of Christ as given in the Confession of Faith, Ch. 25:

"The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation." The Rev. Dr. Barnes in his Biblical Encyclopedia, gives a similar definition on behalf of Protestantism in general under the title "Unity of Faith": "The unanimity of belief in the same great truths of God, and the possession of the grace of faith in a similar form and degree."

But of late there appears to be a most drastic change of views on the part, at least, of the principal denominations. They seem now to be impressed with the conviction that a visible subjection to one authority is essential to the unity of faith and Church government which Christ established. Thus Principal Caven a few years ago—we think it was in July, 1903, or perhaps later on, declared at a meeting of the Presbyterian Alliance in London (Eng.), that the Alliance "represents the union of the Church of Christ, embracing substantially all the Presbyterians of the world, and nearly all the branches of the Reformed Church of Europe." Thus he included Protestants of every shade and variety in one Church of Christ; but he added that "the Christian Church ought to regard union as an imperative duty at the present time, and he trusted that in the not far distant future, it will be possible for them all to represent the principle of union, not only in an imperfect way by some federal constitution, but by a more organic organization."

What would be the sense of such an aspiration if it were true, as we have often been told in the past that "uniformity" such as we have heard it explained so frequently, in the sense we have described above, is not only not commanded by Christ as an essential quality of His Church, but is even not desirable therein?

Protestantism is evidently changing rapidly. The change implied in the facts we have already referred to are toward the truth as it has always been taught by the Catholic Church; but we are sorry to be obliged to say that the general tendency of Protestant thought is not towards the acceptance of truths which have been hitherto rejected, but rather in the opposite direction, that is to say, in the direction of rejecting the most important and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, such as the historical truth of Holy Scripture, and as a necessary consequence its inspiration likewise, the miracle of Christ's virginal birth, His atonement for the sins of mankind, His divinity, and other revealed truths of equal importance.

In confirmation of our statement that the present tendency of the Protestant denomination or sects is to consider the tenets of Christianity as of small importance, we may here mention a recent flat which

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has scarcely been noticed by the press on this side of the Atlantic; it is that the Episcopalian or Anglican, and the Presbyterian churches of Australia have entered upon negotiations for a union, and the result so far is that the committees appointed to confer upon the terms of union have agreed upon a basis which cannot but be a surprise to members of both denominations the world over. The Calvinistic doctrines of Presbyterianism have been entirely ignored, which means that they may be believed or not as each individual pleases, and the necessity of Episcopal ordination has been dispensed with on the part of the Anglicans, so that the ministerial authority of the Presbyterian ministry is to be recognized.

It is not yet certain that this basis of union will be accepted by the two churches concerned, but the adoption of such a basis at all shows how widespread is the present conviction in these Churches that Christian doctrines and practices of nineteen centuries are of so slight importance that the Churches may barter them away at will. Instead of Christ ruling His Church, the Church rules Him.

PURGATORY.

In last week's "Register" we commented on an article on Purgatory in Chambers' Encyclopedia which shows in a remarkable way the change that has come over the non-Catholic world within the last half-century or so concerning this doctrine. Perhaps no doctrine of the Catholic Church was subjected to coarser vilification for some centuries after the outbreak of the so-called Reformation. In striking contrast to this is the article to which we referred, wherein it is shown that the early Christians believed in Purgatory, and that such a belief is the natural and practically inevitable result of the teachings of the New Testament brought face to face with the conditions which confronted the primitive Church.

On this occasion we proceed to add to this striking testimony to the harmony of the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory with the New Testament and reason, a still more surprising contribution, also from a non-Catholic source. The "Encyclopedia Biblica" (or Bible Encyclopedia), published a short time ago by Hastings, is justly regarded as the highest exponent of non-Catholic thought up to date on the subjects of which it treats. Its articles are written by the best non-Catholic Biblical scholars of the day. In the article on Eschatology (or the Last Things) in this work we find the following comment on the words of St. Peter, describing how our Lord immediately after His death, "coming, preached to those spirits that were in prison, which had been some time incredulous, when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noe." (I. Peter iii. 19-20.) After alluding to the difficulty of pointing out precisely who these spirits in prison were, the writer says: "With the more exact determination of the objects of this mission we are not here concerned... for however it be decided, we have here a clear statement that in the case of certain individuals, human or angelic, the scope of redemption is not limited to this life." Mark the force of these words: "The scope of redemption is not limited to this life," that is, there is redemption of imprisoned spirits through Jesus Christ in the world to come. This certainly cannot apply to those spirits to whom our Lord shall say: Depart from Me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire." It is needless to say that our Lord's mission was not to them. Neither can those spirits in prison be the blessed spirits in Heaven. The words, then, of St. Peter, according to the non-Catholic authority quoted, prove that besides the home of the blessed and the abode of the reprobate there is in the world to come a prison in which the spirits there confined are not castaways, are visited by Christ and therefore belong to Him and are destined to be one day with Him in glory, are recipients of mercy at His hands.

Here we have the whole Catholic teaching of Purgatory, proved, according to this non-Catholic authority, from the words of St. Peter. This doctrine embraces two points: 1, the existence of a temporary place of punishment in the world to come. Such a place or state is, according to the writer quoted, the prison in which were the spirits visited by our Lord. He came to relieve them; they were, therefore, in need of help. They be-

longed neither to Heaven nor to Hell. They occupied, then, a middle place or state. 2, they can be assisted by our prayers, particularly by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Christ visited them, and by that visit brought them relief. That is the meaning of the words: "The scope of redemption is not limited to this life." Now, what Christ has done, His Church can do. He is the Head and the members are moved by the same Spirit as, and are to act in all things in harmony with, their Head. Therefore the members united to their Head can visit and relieve those spirits in prison of whom St. Peter speaks.

We dwell at length on this proof of Purgatory, because it is supplied by a non-Catholic source, and is therefore peculiarly valuable as a testimony from outside to the Scriptural character of Catholic teaching on this point and a refutation of the oft-repeated cant that Purgatory "hath no warranty of Scripture." We could dwell on several testimonies of Holy Writ in which the Catholic doctrine is set forth even more clearly than in the passage which, according to the authority quoted, establishes it convincingly. But for the present we confine ourselves to proofs supplied by non-Catholics, leaving those best known to Catholics for another occasion.

DISGRACEFUL IRREVERENCE.

It has been said with truth that more irreverence has been uttered in one Sunday from non-Catholic pulpits in the United States than one could gather from all the writings of the foes of Christianity from the Apostle Julian to Ingersoll. This is well illustrated by an effusion from an individual whose matter and manner are those of the typical Yankee showman, though he is, it seems, at present a resident of our Dominion. In the appropriate setting of a theatre this individual is reported to have held forth in a manner which created much merriment, on the subject of Hell. The following extracts will show the calibre of the man and the character of the audience which could find in them amusement:

"What do you think of a God who makes a man out of mud and then either gives him heaven for what the other fellow did, or hell for what the other fellow did, or else throws him back into mud again?" It is not necessary to call the attention of our readers to the vulgar parody in the foregoing passage of the noble words of Genesis wherein we are told that the Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul." (Gen. ii. 7.) Something more than mud is mentioned here, but the theatre talker's affinity for mud was so great that he could not notice anything higher. If he wants to know what we think in reply to his question we tell him that we are sorry for the mud which enters into the composition of some individuals. "Gives him heaven for what the other fellow did, or hell for what the other fellow did, or else throws him back into mud again." Who is the other fellow? or what does this whole rigmarole mean? Evidently it is a pretty bad mud-dle.

We have next a characteristic example of Scriptural interpretation. "In the parable of Dives and Lazarus the moment you literalize the flames, I'll literalize Abraham's bosom. Then you will have the bad burning, and the good reposing under Abraham's starched shirt-front." "Abraham's starched shirt-front" is a good example of low-grade street corner flippancy. Starched shirt-fronts were not in vogue in Abraham's day; they belong to the age of shallow talkers of whose intellectual outfit they are the principal portion. It does not need much knowledge of the New Testament to be aware that, whilst certain passages relating to the fire of hell are metaphorical, there are others which cannot be so. For example, the sentence our Lord shall pronounce on the wicked at the Last Day cannot be interpreted metaphorically. The words He shall address to the good: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," are not metaphorical. Our Lord will not invite his saints to come into a metaphorical kingdom, but a real one, and for the same reason He will sentence the wicked to depart from Him not into a metaphorical fire, but a real one.

What the nature of this fire is or what punishment it inflicts, the

Church has not defined. The words of an excellent authority, "A Simple Dictionary of Catholic Terms," published some years ago by the Catholic Truth Society of America, on this point, are worthy of particular notice. "As to the fire of hell it is theologically certain that it is real and not metaphorical fire; but as to its nature, or how it affects the condemned there is nothing defined."

But it is not on hell alone that the individual with whom we are dealing vented his ignorant flippancy. Talkers of his stamp are not limited by the rule of keeping to any one subject. They can roam around at will. Hence we are not surprised to light upon the following gem: "God help the Church that is built on Peter, for he cursed and swore and lied like a trooper." What this had to do with the subject of hell does not appear. However, it appealed to ignorant bigotry and that was sufficient justification for its introduction. Peter did curse and lie and swear; but when he did so Christ had not yet given him charge of His flock, had not yet commissioned him to feed His lambs and sheep. It was to the penitent Peter that Christ committed the care of His whole Church. Moreover, Peter's personal sins in no way affected his prerogative of infallibility as vicar of Christ. Peter never fell into sin after he entered into his office as shepherd of Christ's flock. But suppose he did, his personal sin would not affect his prerogative of infallibility in his capacity of vicar of our Lord. Christ guaranteed him infallibility in teaching the whole Church, but nowhere do we read that He gave him impeccability. And these two things, completely distinct, are continually confounded by the non-Catholic talker of far higher calibre than the individual with whom we are dealing.

It would not indeed be easy to find an individual of lower calibre than he. A man who could make the tremendous subject of the punishment of the wicked in the future life a subject for vulgar and shallow smartness, is far beneath the level of decent Paganism. The everlasting punishment awaiting the wicked is a doctrine not confined to Christianity. It is to be found in the most ancient religions and philosophies of the world. It is one of the oldest and most widely diffused beliefs of mankind. And this universality, in the case of a doctrine so repugnant to human self-will and sensuality, speaks eloquently of the force with which it is impressed on the consciousness of man. Deep, indeed, must be the conviction that the eternal principles of right and wrong demanded such a doctrine when it could have taken such a hold of the religious sense of mankind at all times and amongst races and beliefs of the most varied character.

To compare the writings of the Pagan poet Virgil and the Pagan philosopher Plato on this tremendous subject with such effusions as we have been now criticising is to show how far below the level of decent Paganism our modern sectarians have gone. Their forefathers vilified Purgatory and sent men to hell not on account of their demerits, but because of God's decree. And now these Predestination ideas have created such a revolution in the minds of their descendants that they treat the subject of hell with a mockery which would shock a respectable Pagan. Such is the goal to which rebellion against the authority of the Catholic Church inevitably leads.

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