

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.
CCXXIII.

As we have seen, the Republican correspondent not only treats it as a "chief fault" of M. Bremond's book that he esteems the Roman Church superior to Protestantism, but that he esteems Christianity superior to "the other world-religions," to Judaism, Buddhism, and to Mohammedanism. Now as all Christians regard Christianity as superior to other religions, not only in degree, but in kind, it follows that in this gentleman's opinion the very profession of Christianity is an intolerable grievance, and just cause of complaint. I do not mean that he is yet ready for so explicit a conclusion, but it is plainly contained in his premises, and logic will not wait on a man's convenience.

It appears then that we are bound, even by ordinary propriety, to account all the great religions, from Christianity to Brahminism and Buddhism, as standing in one class, as essentially equals. We are virtually required by such writers as this correspondent to hold ourselves obliged, for the sake of good manners, to do as they do in China. There, in a large company, it has been not unusual for one guest to say to another: "What is your honorable creed? and on learning it, if it is different from his own, he is bound by etiquette to pronounce a eulogy upon it. So it goes round, and at the conclusion all are to exclaim in chorus: "Religions are many, Reason is one; we are all disciples of Reason."

Now we know that there are many among ourselves who would be delighted to have this fashion brought in here, who esteem all positive religions as essentially irrational, and are only willing to tolerate them as ancestral systems of observances, which are not to be supposed to mean anything very serious, not very much more than a man's hereditary surname, or family remembrances.

This may be all very nice for those that like it, those for whom God is not, or for whom He is an inscrutable Something, essentially, hopelessly unknown. The trouble is, that Christians have never so behaved or believed from the beginning. Christians believe that the Gospel is perfect reason, of course not in any one man's imperfect perceptions, but in itself, and that it is leading all but its adherents towards the actual possession of perfect reason. They must believe that other religions are either evil or at best inadequate, capable only of conducting their disciples to a certain point, beyond which if they would make progress they must turn to Christ.

Indeed, even apart from the question of truth, Christians perceive that plain facts stand in the way of giving the name of "world-religion" to any other system than their own. Brahminism, in its avowed nature, is restricted to India, whose confines if a Brahmin leaves he becomes excommunicate. Buddhism has never made any serious conquests except in Eastern Asia, so that even the title "Light of Asia" is far too wide for it. Zoroastrianism (now purely Persian) is Islam rigorously forbids the Koran to be translated out of the Arabic, and is utterly repelled by the now governing races of mankind. When the late Lord Stanley of Alderly became a Mohammedan, it was as much a *lusus naturæ* as if he had had two heads, or three eyes. Judaism is found the world through, but is national, not universal, and shrinks from a convert as a calamity.

Christianity, on the other hand, has not only far more adherents than any other religion (for it is now known that there are more than 120,000,000 actual Buddhists) but, through the governing races of mankind, it is in a political control of most other religions. Its missions, although as yet having but a few million converts, have, with high confidence, in almost every land, taken the reins of the planet in the name of Christ, very much as St. Paul, although apparently making few converts in Spain, did in prophetic anticipation when he went to Cadiz.

True, Christians look for a time of dimness and apostasy, but they know that "at evening time it shall be light." In this expectation they are confirmed by so great an unbelieving scholar as the positivist Bartholomew St. Hilaire, who treats the ultimate prevalence of Christianity as an inevitable fact of the future. Renan also declares Christianity the uniquely perfect religion of mankind, no more to be treated as one footing with others than our civilization, derived from Greece, is to be likened to the aberrant societies of pagan Mexico or Peru.

I submit, therefore, that M. Bremond is not to be brought to account for treating Christianity as standing essentially and uniquely above what this writer very ineffectually designates "other world-religions," as being really, both in fact and in fitness, the only world religion.

Our writer is horrified that M. Bremond should suppose that the care of the faith and morals of mankind has been divinely committed to "the church of Damascus and Hildebrand, of the culpable Innocents, the apostolic Pauls, and the amazing Borgias Pope Alexander."

I am here somewhat embarrassed. Ordinarily, when a reviewer gives an account of a Christian book he does not treat it as a grievance that the author writes as a Christian. Yet this gentleman does. Ordinarily, when he gives account of a Catholic book, he does not view it as a scandal that the author writes as a Catholic. Yet this gentleman does. "Jenkins may be a bull if he will, but being a bull, he shall have no horns." One does not know what to do with such a man. He mixes the simple reviewer and the acrid controversialist in such a hopeless way that you cannot tell at any moment where you are to find him.

However, irrationally as he has no right to be treated irrationally. Our business is, to give a man good reasons, and leave him, like the great lexico-

grapher, to find an understanding for himself.

It is certain that if M. Bremond has any rights at all, he has a right to assume what all Christians assume, be they Catholics, Greeks or Protestants. Now all these three Christian parties, and the Jews besides, maintain that the faith and morals of Israel were committed to the care of the Hebrew priests, especially of the high priests, and this independently of the personal worthiness or unworthiness of any particular priest or pontiff. Yet a prophetic voice said: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so." Moreover, it was a high priest who murdered the Redeemer. Yet this did not stagger the apostles in their recognition of the Divine authority of the Jewish high priesthood, until, by the judgments of the invisibly returned Christ, in the year 70, it came to an end.

Moreover, it is certain that the priesthood, assisted by the scribes, sometimes under high priests that were good and sometimes under those that were not, brought the Israelites out of idolatry, defended them against being overpowered by Hellenism, maintained an availing centre of unity, and, even unconsciously, cherished the elect remnant which in the fulness of time was ready to receive the Messiah. But for the priesthood Israel would have been likely to vanish into impalpable dust.

Now if Christians are to be allowed to believe this of the line of Jewish high priests (and to refuse them leave to do so), there is something in the fact that Catholics believe that this, in a far higher sense, has been committed to the line of Christian high priests? Certain it is, to take a single point of history, judged by Emil Gebhardt as a philosopher, not as a theologian, that had the conclave in 1378 failed to choose an Italian Pope, Europe was likely to be gone hopelessly to pieces. Compared with this the evils of the Great Schism, sad as they were, were a small matter. Besides, does it go for nothing that the two great Protestant Bishops, Stubbs and Westcott, speaking of the earlier times, attest the usual justice and wisdom of the papal arbitrations between warring parties and nations, and that Westcott intimates that Providence must have used the righteousness of these decisions as so signally independent of the personal value of the pontiffs who rendered them? He intimates that the Roman Catholics ought to make more use of this argument than they do. It is amusing to see a really eminent man drawing a conclusion favorable to the Papacy from the very same fact which our friend the correspondent would fain use as an argument to damn it. Moreover, setting aside Unitarianism, who often are not so very much scandalized to be told that they are but dubious Christians, other Christians, however they may call this definition of the Papacy a perversion, or that one an unwarranted addition to Christian doctrine, commonly allow that it has firmly maintained the true and central Christian doctrine, concerning God, Creation, Providence, Redemption, Holiness, Morality, Eternal Life. It was principally the steadfastness of the Roman Bishops—as Dean Stanley says, their consciousness of being appointed the Rock of the Church—to which we owe it that Docetism was repelled, and Gnosticism, Arrianism, with its lesser sequels, and Manichæism, ancient and medieval. I am far from meaning that the thought and courage of the great Greek Fathers were not vital elements of these victories. Yet Harnack and other writers are bringing out with new distinctness the part which Rome had in fashioning the earliest results, long before the time of Nicea, not to say of St. Leo. True, Harnack maintains that certain Romanizing passages of St. Cyprian are interpolations, but then, says he, they are interpolations added by Cyprian himself.

Really, I can't help thinking that Rome has something to say for herself, even if M. Bremond should hold his peace.

We will next examine our friend's catalogue of Popes.

CHARLES C. STARBUCK.
Andover, Mass.

SOMETHING THE LAITY CAN DO.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul owes its spirit to that great Apostle of Charity; but in its present organic form it was founded by Frederic Ozanam in Paris in the last century. It soon spread to all the great Catholic centres; to day no city of any importance is without conferences of the order. It is composed entirely of laymen. Their work is to hunt up the needy and deserving poor and to bring them temporal relief without exposing them to mortification of public mendicancy. Within the district assigned to the conference, which is generally the section of the city described by the limits of the parish, the members make themselves acquainted with all the poor; study their condition and the best means of assisting them temporally and spiritually. Very often the temporal relief is made necessary by moral conditions within the family circle. The relief supplied by the conferences is of both kinds, and herein lies the progress and power for good of the organization. Not on bread alone do the poor live. They need good example, good counsel, good books and papers. These with food and momentary relief are the conferences' supply. In fact, the work of conferences consists chiefly in visiting the poor in their homes. So powerful is this agency of reform that in the great Protestant cities of London and Berlin they have copied exactly the methods of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, omitting its name and giving to the movement the more scientific appellation of "University Settlement."

Men outside the Church have learned that the only way to lift up the poor is to send their charitable neighbors to

cheer and comfort them in their homes.

We hear a great deal in these days about lay co-operation in the Catholic Church. It is a theme calculated to stir the enthusiasm and loosen the tongues of the devoted clergy and generous laity. We have always advocated such co-operation; but have not failed to put out the fields in which such co-operation is both beautiful and desirable. We do not want the assistance of the laity in the government of the Church. We do not want their partnership in the management of the educational institutions of the Church. These things the clergy can best attend to themselves; as they have a special avocation. But the care of the poor and the supervision of the widow and the orphan have been the especial province of the laity since the apostolic days. Here the layman has a wide field and one in which he is not liable to come into collision with the constituted authorities of the Church.

God bless the noble Society of St. Vincent de Paul—Western Watchman.

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON

Twenty First Sunday After Pentecost

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.
Should not then have had compassion on this fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee?—St. Mark, xviii, 33.

These words of to-day's Gospel are spoken by our Lord to every one who has been sinning in charity to his neighbor. Each one of us, as a servant of God, as a steward of the gifts, both temporal and spiritual, which He has entrusted to us that we may use them for the furtherance of His honor and glory, is a heavy debtor to the divine justice. But His mercy and love are always ready to temper His justice, if only we show the proper dispositions, if only we bend our rebellious wills to the conditions He requires of us, without which it is impossible for us to obtain forgiveness. This condition is found in the oft-repeated but little thought of petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us." The servant in the parable received forgiveness from his lord for the sum of ten thousand talents (a very large sum of money), yet he was unmerciful to his fellow-servant, who owed him a hundred pence. The difference between these sums is by no means so great as the difference between our offences against Almighty God and those of our brethren against us. If we could only realize who it is that we have offended, and then reflect as well upon the ingratitude in offending Him, as upon the innumerable benefits He has showered upon us, we might form some faint idea of the gravity of our sin, and of the immense debt that we owe to His justice. We could not then refuse forgiveness to our neighbor for the trifling, and perhaps merely fancied, injuries that we may have suffered from him. With what measure you shall mete, it shall be measured to you again. "If you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts," you cannot hope for pardon from God.

How, then, can we best practice this forgiveness which is so necessary for us? In the first place, it must be earnest and sincere forgiveness. It must be "from your hearts," as our Lord says. No mere outward show of forgiveness will be enough, for God sees the heart, and no appearance will satisfy Him. But, on the other hand, the forgiveness will not be real and earnest unless it be shown outwardly. Many profess their willingness to forgive who yet show resentment and a spirit of revenge in many little ways, by looks, words, and actions which prove that there is no real forgiveness in the heart. Then again we find persons who, when they are urged to forgive some wrong answer: "Well, Father, I suppose I must forgive, if you tell me so." It is plain that this is but a very unwilling and faint-hearted forgiveness, which will not answer God. Why will not the generosity of God towards us lead us to show a like spirit towards our brethren?

We would strive to forgive offences the moment they are committed against us. Our natural impulse when any insult is offered to us is to resent it at once, and pay back in the same coin. How different is this from the example set us by our Lord, "Who when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not." We should check the first uprisings of resentment, and by the imitation of our Blessed Lord's silence before His accusers and tormentors. By the practice of this Christian silence many a feud of long continuance would be prevented.

We must also "lay aside all malice," and be ready, when an injury has been done, to be reconciled with our offending brother. This is often very hard for us to do, and very repugnant to our natural inclinations, but it is, nevertheless, absolutely necessary. If we bear malice towards any one, we are not worthy of the name of Christians, or followers of Christ.

Try, then, to put in practice the teaching of this day's Gospel, and forgive from your heart those who have offended you, showing your forgiveness by your words and acts. There is nothing more scandalous and injurious to the Christian name than constant quarrels and long continued animosities between those who go regularly to the sacraments. Follow, then, the injunction of St. Paul: "Let all bitterness, and anger and indignation, and clamor, and blasphemy be taken away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind to one another, even as God has forgiven you in Christ."

ARRANGED FOR HER RESCUE.

AUSTRALIAN WOMAN WHO VISITED A CONVENT WITH THE EXPECTATION OF BEING MADE A PRISONER.

Preaching at Naracorte, South Australia, recently, on occasion of the blessing of a convent, Right Rev. Mgr. Byrne, V. G., said:

"I assure you it is much more difficult to get into a convent than to get out of it; to get out of it one has only to open the door and walk away. All the stories found in anti-Catholic books about detaining people in convents are pure calumny, too absurd to be believed. But now a Catholic, made the following statement to me: 'When the Dominicans came to Adelaide I was anxious to visit the convent and see what sort of beings they were. I ascertained the time they received visitors, and drove to the convent. Having got out of the carriage, I said to the coachman: 'Look at your watch; it is now three o'clock. If I am not out at 3:30 drive to my brother and give him this letter,' which read thus: 'Dear —, I am forcibly detained in the convent, Franklin street. Come at once and take me out.' Having made provision for my rescue, I ventured into the convent, where I was warmly received by the nuns, and was at once quite at home with them. I became, however, in a very short time very fidgety, and often looked at my watch. At last I stood up and asked the Sisters to excuse me for a moment, as I wished to see the coachman on a matter of importance. I then hurried out to him and said: 'Give me that letter and wait till I come out.' I returned to the convent in a

happier mood, and prolonged the conversation so long that I apologized to the nuns, who, needless to say, made no attempt to detain me. Now, if calumnies about convents could be so great an impression upon the mind of an educated and experienced woman as she was, how much greater do they make upon the minds of the simple, the credulous and prejudiced?"

Drink Did it.

"Drink did it; God help me!" were the words which a Brooklyn man scrawled on an envelope recently before he fired the pistol that ended his life. The man had a prosperous business and a large family to whom he was devoted in his sober moments, and saw no way to break the chains that bound him but by ending his existence with his own hand. "Drink did it; God help me!" might well serve as fitting inscription over thousands of other men who go down to ruin and death every year under a like enslavement. And yet there are those professing to be well being who have the drink shops turning out their grist of shame and misery not only for six days of every week, but on the seventh day also.—Leslie's Weekly.

The man who is standing on the mountain top and sees the path winding up should be charitable to the man down in the valley who is losing his way in the thickets. We need to cultivate charity for our own mistakes.

Much prudence does not always keep one from committing follies, nor much sense from thinking them, nor much wit from uttering them.—Abbe Roux.

If one shines, the next life to it must catch the light; for such is the mysterious might God gives to upright souls.

The greater the irritation in the throat the more distressing the cough becomes. Coughing is the effort of Nature to expel the irritating substance from the air passages. Bickel's Anti-Consumptive Syrup will heal the inflamed parts, which exude mucus, and restore them to a healthy state, the cough disappearing under the curative effects of the medicine. It is pleasant to the taste, and the price, 25 cents, is within the reach of all.

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SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION.

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First, however, a word of explanation. Forgetful persons, perhaps find themselves enquiring: Why does the Bishop anoint those confirmed on the forehead and why does he impart a slight blow on the cheek? The lessons are important. And were they properly appreciated there would be fewer Catholics recreant to their duties. For, by the first we are reminded that we should never be ashamed of our faith. And by the second that we should even suffer persecution for it. The lives of many Catholics prove the need of fresh reminders in these particulars.

In regard to the dispositions for receiving the sacraments, these are twofold: namely, those of the body and those of the soul. The former include cleanliness of person and modesty of dress. The latter require that the individuals be baptized; that the persons to be confirmed be in the state of grace; that they possess a knowledge of the sacrament as well as the principal articles of faith.

These conditions being fulfilled, the effects of the sacrament are to imprint an indelible character on the soul; to fortify us with courage to proclaim our faith under persecution and to perfect us in the graces which we received at baptism. Hence it follows that by the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation we are clothed with the necessary armor to battle valiantly as soldiers of Jesus Christ, and are elevated to the real dignity of Christian manhood.

Finally, as to the necessity of receiving the sacrament. From the effects just enumerated one must conclude that its reception is, indeed, most necessary. But many additional reasons might be assigned. In these days of religious indifference the dangers to our faith are multiplied. But as it is through the Sacrament of Confirmation we receive the courage to confess our faith, it follows that all should avail themselves of it. Besides failure to receive it under certain conditions is to become guilty of a great sin.—Sacred Heart Review.

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AUSTRALIAN WOMAN WHO VISITED A CONVENT WITH THE EXPECTATION OF BEING MADE A PRISONER.

Preaching at Naracorte, South Australia, recently, on occasion of the blessing of a convent, Right Rev. Mgr. Byrne, V. G., said:

"I assure you it is much more difficult to get into a convent than to get out of it; to get out of it one has only to open the door and walk away. All the stories found in anti-Catholic books about detaining people in convents are pure calumny, too absurd to be believed. But now a Catholic, made the following statement to me: 'When the Dominicans came to Adelaide I was anxious to visit the convent and see what sort of beings they were. I ascertained the time they received visitors, and drove to the convent. Having got out of the carriage, I said to the coachman: 'Look at your watch; it is now three o'clock. If I am not out at 3:30 drive to my brother and give him this letter,' which read thus: 'Dear —, I am forcibly detained in the convent, Franklin street. Come at once and take me out.' Having made provision for my rescue, I ventured into the convent, where I was warmly received by the nuns, and was at once quite at home with them. I became, however, in a very short time very fidgety, and often looked at my watch. At last I stood up and asked the Sisters to excuse me for a moment, as I wished to see the coachman on a matter of importance. I then hurried out to him and said: 'Give me that letter and wait till I come out.' I returned to the convent in a

happier mood, and prolonged the conversation so long that I apologized to the nuns, who, needless to say, made no attempt to detain me. Now, if calumnies about convents could be so great an impression upon the mind of an educated and experienced woman as she was, how much greater do they make upon the minds of the simple, the credulous and prejudiced?"

Drink Did it.

"Drink did it; God help me!" were the words which a Brooklyn man scrawled on an envelope recently before he fired the pistol that ended his life. The man had a prosperous business and a large family to whom he was devoted in his sober moments, and saw no way to break the chains that bound him but by ending his existence with his own hand. "Drink did it; God help me!" might well serve as fitting inscription over thousands of other men who go down to ruin and death every year under a like enslavement. And yet there are those professing to be well being who have the drink shops turning out their grist of shame and misery not only for six days of every week, but on the seventh day also.—Leslie's Weekly.