

"OUR CHRISTIAN HERITAGE."

A BAPTIST MINISTER PREACHES A SERMON IN PRAISE OF CATHOLICITY.

At Springfield, Ohio, last Sunday evening, Rev. Father B. Cressey, pastor of the First Baptist Church, preached a sermon on the Catholic Church, which does him credit as a man of good-will and a minister of the gospel of peace.

For his text Mr. Cressey took "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "Come and see." (John 1:46).

I love to think that God is good, I love to believe that though He tests my back with seeming rods of torture, and entangles my feet with the graves of my dearest ones, He yet loves me. It helps my manhood to believe in the

goodness of God. I love also to think about the goodness of my fellowmen. I know right well that there is really no good thing in any man; and yet, there is that in every human voice and countenance that tells of divine birth and destination, and that gives me permission to love and help the man. I am also deeply interested in the religions of the world—those systems of thought and feeling and action by which men are trying to find the path that leads up to that garden of God—paradise.

There are so many of those religions that again and again the question forces itself, how is it possible for men to be so various in their religious thought and activity when their religious purpose is the same?

Our American Christianity is in two chief divisions—Catholicism and Protestantism. There is little sympathy between these divisions. Indeed Catholicism will scarcely admit that any good can come of the Nazareth of Protestantism; as little is Protestantism disposed to admit that any good can come out of Catholicism.

"COME AND SEE." I hold in my hand a recent book, "Our Christian Heritage," written by Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore. I have read it with interest. It has informed my mind; it has helped my heart; it is an addition to the Christian literature of our age. It enables me to speak of "Some of the good things of Catholicism." The book contains thirty-five short discourses on topics of great and common interest to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not polemical. It has nothing to say against any Christian denomination that still retains faith in at least the divine mission of Jesus Christ.

The Cardinal gladly acknowledges that most of the topics discussed are able and zealous advocates among Protestant writers. A few slight changes were made many a critical Protestant would never suspect that it was written by a Catholic. The spirit of the book is to win. The spirit of the book is to win. The spirit of the book is to win.

First, Catholicism holds firmly to the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cardinal Gibbons' three chapters on this question would help many a Protestant's faith, and stir him with a new fervor for souls. Mr. Cressey gave some of the eminent prelate's arguments and said that surely Protestantism is stronger than otherwise possible because Catholicism thus holds and preaches the divinity of Jesus. Again, he asked, if it is not true that neither Catholicism nor Protestantism can afford to ignore the co-operation of the other in thus seeking to stay the

which threatens the very life of the Church? In the second place he considered the chapters on the immortality of the soul and that on eternal punishment. The Cardinal begins this chapter with the famous soliloquy of Cato. Mr. Cressey read a beautiful extract from this chapter and, also, one on future punishment, showing how a man lands on the other shore in the same frame of mind in which he leaves this. God is indeed merciful, but He never forces His mercy upon a man. While the life is infinite its application is finite. He wishes the salvation of all men; but can any one hope to be saved if repentance be wanting? To cry for pardon He ever listens—but what if that cry is never heard? On repentance he says that sorrow and repentance are not convertible terms. Repentance always means sorrow, but sorrow does not always mean repentance.

Mr. Cressey next turned to the DOCTRINE OF PRAYER. The Cardinal's theory of prayer leads him to say that God from all eternity foresees that he would pray for such a thing such a time, and had so arranged to grant it. In other words, he does not pray to alter God's designs, but he prays in order to execute them. When a Christian addresses to God a prayer worthy of being heard, He has already heard it from all eternity, and, if worthy of being granted, He has arranged the world expressly in favor of his prayer.

Coming more directly to the conflict between Christianity and science he says that difficulties do not necessarily involve doubts and denials. Turning to the other "good things of Catholicism" Mr. Cressey said that Catholicism was well known for her benevolence. A founding babe can scarcely utter its first cry before a kind Sister's arm is around it. Catholic charity embraces all, without regard to faith or nationality.

Catholicism respects the words of Him who said, "What man hath joined together let no man put asunder," and, more than that, she means the same by them that He did, and (let not the comparison be odious) she is not BETTER THAN PROTESTANTS in this respect! As citizens of the United States we must view with alarm the great evil of Mormonism, but the divorce law is in effect the same thing, as it practically leads to successive polygamy. How can we all agree that to educate the mind and not the heart is to make the racial. "I recognize a justness as well as correctness in Catholicism's fundamental thought: that religion is an integral part of education."

In conclusion he said, "Way have I led your thoughts in this direction? I am not about to enter the Catholic Church. I am not seeking an office to which Catholic votes can elect me. I am not seeking to-night TO WIN CATHOLICS to the Protestant faith, nor to suggest to Protestants that their hope of heaven will be better if they embrace Catholicism. I would not cast on any one of my Christian faith a single reflection; this is God's house and hour. I am painfully reminded of two things: That much religious prejudice exists among God's people in our city, and that the enemies of His dear Son are an insolent host. Many members of each communion stand over against each other and say with unaffected vigor: "Can any good come out of such a Nazareth?" To all such I would repeat, "Come and see." \* \* \* There are certain differences between Catholicism and Protestantism which will scarcely permit us to pray together, but surely we may reach that point of Christian consecration at which we will think a prayer for others' good in spiritual things. "I love to think that Father Sidney is one of my brethren in Christ, and that after we have dismissed our last congregation, we may sit together at the feet of the same Christ. "God bless the Catholics; God bless the Protestants. May they all love Christ as never before. May Heaven's kiss of peace touch all the lips and make them sweet with the praises of man's one and only Saviour—Jesus Christ of Calvary."

heard made by the sea every time the combing breakers pounded the shore, I would probably have heard him repeat that other sentence of the Sun: "The Christian Church must oppose dogma and authority to science as logic to emotion, and treat the religious demands of man as an expression of sentiment far more material than the processes of reason."

To the second part of the above statement the preacher would doubtless subscribe in full and give his adhesion to the first so far as Catholicism holds that Christianity has any dogmatic authority. His oft-repeated call to his unconverted hearers was that they must "feel the need of Christ." If I read the Sun aright it echoes his call, and both would then, if consistent and logical, unite in saying: "You, Christian preachers and teachers, Protestant and Catholic, must exhort the unbeliever to 'feel the need' generally of all that the Christian religion may, can, or will inspire faith in; and if they are sincere 'feelers' they will go on to feel the need of three persons in God, of the incarnation of the Son, of Christ's crucifixion and miraculous resurrection, the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the rest that they will demonstrably find by faith as 'truer than demonstrable facts' and many other dogmas 'opposed (contented) to the logical processes of their reason.' Do not attempt to prove the facts of divine revelation and the miraculous testimony to them as you would prove any common fact of human knowledge, for they are undemonstrable to reason, being contradictory to its dictates. Moreover, that is not the heart, the only source and way of religion. For (and here the extremes of Protestantism and agnosticism meet) by 'feeling the need in the heart' long enough and strong enough all the various actual dogmas of Christianity and super-naturalism will naturally evolve out of their inner consciousness. Feeling, dear Christian preachers, is your own rare foundation upon which to build up your scheme of divinely revealed truth about God, the 'unexplainable mysteries of life' and man's future destiny."

I think that is a pretty fair statement of the sense of the preaching at Asbury Park and the feeling of the Sun of last Sunday, and I still think that I am right in characterizing any faith that pretends to be evolved from sentiment, lacking true intellectual conviction, as stupid. When we Catholic priests get hold of what is known among us as a "sentimental convert" one who is led to us more by want appeals to his taste for the beautiful or what, nine times out of ten, he fancies is so in mere external worship, than by rational apprehension of the truth, we have very little confidence in his probable perseverance in the faith.

There may be, indeed, deep religious sentiment, but religion is not at bottom a thing of the heart. Faith is an intellectual act, as the definition I saw from St. Thomas affirms; and if he adds that it requires the imperium of the will as well, it is not that the intellect must be helped out by sentiment, or that faith is founded in feeling, but that the will must complete the mental act of simple apprehension of the truth and of assent to it in the plane of assent so that the man can say—Credo. This act of the will is subsequent to the act of intellectual perception, as the philosophical axiom has it: *Nihil volitum quod non cognitur*.

Neither is faith a faculty, as contended by the Sun. It is not a difficulty but a judgment, a judgment of reason exercising itself, aided by grace, from another and a higher, but by no means of a contradictory order. The Sun, in its explanation of my alleged misinterpretation of its former editorial remark, only reaffirms the twofold error which has led so many to reject Christianity as irrational. First that we start out with propositions which are self-evident, and that we spiritually demonstrate and accept them on an equally undemonstrable dogmatic authority; and second, that the dogmas of faith are in their propositions contradictory to the dictates of reason, but which we must believe anyway by "putting our reason under subjection to faith."

One has not far to go for the origin of these popular errors. From the day that Luther changed his base and denounced reason as shedding no more light in religion than a piece of dung in a lantern, Protestantism, although equally obliged with us rationally to certify the facts of revelation, by its unreasonable criterion of private judgment and tests has not only built up a lot of sentimental acts, but has stimulated the revolt of the intellect, the agnostic, and the rationalist, against Christianity in general, a revolt that would simply not be possible of continuance and enlargement were these many sincere reason worshipping enemies of God and Christ not so evidently lacking in the knowledge of the first principles upon which the Catholic Church, the only rational Christianity, is founded.

This is not the place to enlarge upon the rational prolegomena of faith, the first subject to meet one's eye on opening a work of Catholic theology. It will be enough for me to say that the Catholic Church has always stoutly defended the just claims of reason in religion, and affirmed that there can be no possibility of faith without reason, or in doctrine which contradict reason, just as she holds there can be no grace without nature and that there can be no grace that contradicts nature. Grace is not unnatural, but supernatural, as faith is not irrational, but super-rational.

It is wrong, therefore, to talk about nature as if they were in opposite and mutually negative relations. If those propositions I have signalled above are not errors then every intelligent Catholic has entirely mistaken the reason of the faith that is in him, and we must look about for some other apology for merit. The praise is accordingly accorded us by the Sun for our humble submission to the magisterial authority of the Catholic Church in faith and morals.

ALFRED YOUNG, C.S.P. House of the Paulists, West 59th Street.

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Table with 2 columns: LIST OF PRIZES and WORTH. Includes prizes worth \$15,000, \$5,000, \$2,500, \$1,000, \$500, \$250, \$100, \$50, \$25, \$10, \$5, \$2, \$1, \$0.50, \$0.25, \$0.10, \$0.05, \$0.02, \$0.01. Total worth \$52,740.00. TICKET, \$1.00. 11 TICKETS FOR \$10.00. S. E. LEFEBVRE MANAGER, 18 ST. JAMES ST., MONTREAL, CANADA.

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