

The True Witness

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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HONOR AND WORSHIP.

"Why do you claim to honor and not to worship the Saints?" This question appears in a letter addressed to us the other day by a non Catholic subscriber. The only pertinent answer we can give is, that we claim to *honor* and not *worship* the saints, simply because we do not worship them in the sense of worship as applied to God, and that we do honor them, because they are worthy of all the respect and devotion that we can pay to them. God, Himself, honored them, and why should not we? In other words, we claim exactly what is true, and nothing else. Times numberless have we written upon this subject, and have fully explained it over and over again; but probably our correspondent has not read those editorials, or else he was not a subscriber last year.

It is absolutely unnecessary to enter into any lengthy essay upon the reasonableness of honoring the saints, the angels and the Blessed Virgin. Surely there is no honest Christian—no matter what his denomination—who would be willing to argue against honoring the chosen and the elect of God. As far as the term worship goes, it has two very distinct meanings, both of which we find in the pages of the Old and New Testaments exemplified. There is the worship of God; that is to say, the paying of the tribute that a creature owes its Creator. He alone has a right to that worship, and He alone receives it. Then the word worship is used to designate a certain amount of reverence for and confidence in the chosen friends of God. It is by no means necessary that a Catholic should invoke, or worship, if you prefer the term, the saints, in order to be saved; but it is a very powerful help along the way of salvation. When in the book of Genesis we read that "two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of the city, and seeing them he rose up and went to meet them, and *worshipped* prostrate to the ground," (xix. 1.) what are we to infer from the words? Are we to jump to the conclusion that Lot paid the same tribute to the two angels that he did to God? "When Josue was in the field of the city of Jericho, he lifted up his eyes, and saw a man standing over against him, holding a drawn sword, and he went to him, and said: art thou one of ours, or of our adversaries? And he answered: No, but I am prince of the host of the Lord, and now I am come, Josue fell on his face to the ground, and

worshipping, said: what saith my Lord to his servant? (Josue v. 13, 14, 15)". This evidently was an angel, such as stood with flaming sword at the gates of Paradise. Does any one pretend that Josue took the stranger for God, or worshipped him as his Creator? Josue honored the heavenly envoy, or rather worshipped him in the sense in which Catholics worship the saints.

Even in the first Book of Kings (xxviii. 14.) we find not only worship paid to the holy dead, but even adoration—although to adore is far more important than to merely worship. "And Saul understood that it was Samuel, and he bowed himself with his face to the ground and adored." Do you want a still more striking example of the distinction between that worship paid to God and the worship of God's creatures. In the first Book of Paralipomenon (1 Chron., xxix. 20): "And David commanded all the assembly: 'Bless ye the Lord our God.' And all the Assembly blessed the Lord the God of their fathers: and they bowed themselves, and worshipped God, and then the King." Does that mean that the people accorded the same honor to David that they did to God? Is it not evident that their worship of God was adoration, while their worship of the King was merely a mark of respect for the anointed of the Lord? If we were to quote the twelfth chapter of the Book of Tobias, in which the Angel Raphael makes himself known and says that "prayer is good with fasting and alms," and informs Tobias that "I offered thy prayers to the Lord," we may be told that our friend's Bible does not contain this Book. We are aware of that fact, but his is merely a mutilated Bible, and so mutilated because the Books suppressed emphasize too strongly the Catholic doctrines.

We will take the Book of Numbers, (xxii. 31.):—"Forthwith the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw an angel standing in the way with a drawn sword, and he *worshipped* him, falling flat on the ground." It is wonderful how frequently angels appeared with sword in hand, how often they were worshipped in the days of the old law. We might go on, column after column, with quotations from the Holy Scriptures that show most positively the meaning of the word worship when applied to creatures. When, in the ordinary municipal affairs, we speak of "His Worship the Mayor," we do not mean that he, either as an individual or as mayor, is worthy of worship; we simply convey the idea that on account of his high office he deserves respect over and above the ordinary citizen.

But, to come back to the original question, it matters little what term you use; the fact is this, that the Roman Catholic honors, reveres, pays tribute to, invokes, loves, respects, venerates, cherishes, worships (if you will) the angels, the saints and the Holy and Immaculate Mother of Christ. In so doing he is only imitating the prophets, the patriarchs, the kings of the Old Testament, and he is merely following the example of the apostles of the new law, and that of Christ. The person who seeks to translate this veneration or invocation into idolatrous adoration must have either little brains or little conscience. If he is devoid of understanding, then it is useless trying to convince him; if he is not sincere, it is a loss of time to bother with him. All we can say is, that some day or other each one of us, Protestant and Catholic alike, will learn by experience how useful and consoling a thing it is to have the friendship of the saints and the powerful advocacy of the Blessed Virgin, when we stand alone, with our works, before the Eternal Tribunal.

ST. JEAN BAPTISTE.

We anticipate, by a few days, the annual celebration of the French Canadian national festival; before the next issue of our paper the feast of St. Jean Baptiste will have come and gone. It is a two-fold day of rejoicing; it is, first of all, a religious feast, and then it is a national festival. As may be noticed in the manner of celebrating the day this distinction is observed. The first feature on the programme is always High Mass and the accompanying sermon. After this marked recognition of the Almighty, after this act of consecration to God, after this sublime tribute to the Ruler of nations, the members of the different societies, in particular, and the French Canadians in general, proceed to do honor to the occasion.

It seems to us that there is something very remarkable in the fact of St. John the Baptist being chosen as the patron saint of the French people in Canada. Who was St. John the Baptist? He was the precursor of Christ; he was the one who baptized, in Jordan's waters, the Redeemer of men; he was "the voice crying in the wilderness, 'make straight the ways of the Lord.'" His was a wonderfully grand mission, one that seemed to embrace two great eras, a species of connecting link between the old law that was to be cancelled and the new law that was to be established. Looking back, through the mist of nineteen long centuries, his grand figure appears heightened and elevated in the distance. We see him at one moment out in the desert, clad in skins, with his hair floating freely upon his shoulders, his rough girdle around his body, his pilgrim's staff in hand. He treads the sandy wilds and approaches the habitations of men. With the eye of an inspired being, and the voice of a great prophet, he leans against a rock and thunders down the valley the tidings of the One whose shoes he is not worthy to unbuckle. At another moment we behold him pouring the water on the head of Divinity and thereby emphasizing the law that all men must be regenerated in the floods of baptism. There is a wild, grand, elevating beauty about St. John the Baptist; he seems to have possessed all the rugged strength of a warrior, all the meekness of a child, all the determination of a predestined martyr, all the devotion of one accustomed to converse with the Eternal. Even in his death there is something peculiar; his head was cut off by a tyrant in order to please the whims of a dancing courtesan. The victim of a bad woman and a weak, but equally bad man, the great saint was ushered into heaven by the crimson portal of martyrdom.

We see in all this a truthful picture of the mission of the French Canadian people in Canada. Their missionaries were the precursors of Christ on this continent; they saved the innumerable tribes of the country from infidelity and barbarism, by means of the great sacrament of Baptism; they were "a voice crying in the wilderness" of our primeval forests, "make straight the ways of the Lord;" they were more—they not only called upon others to open the avenues for Christianity, but they carved, with their own hands, paths through the untrodden wilds and planted the cross in all ends of the land. Again, their mission—like that of St. John the Baptist—seemed to connect two epochs; they constituted the hyphen between the old world's civilization and the glorious prospects that the new world unfolded. Like St. John, we behold the genius of French Canadian pioneer missionary work, clothed in rough garments, clutching the staff of Faith, and awakening the

echoes of a whole uncivilized continent with the messages of peace, of salvation, of glorious promise that the ages had transmitted. And for three centuries, through all the trials, successes, vicissitudes and triumphs of their history the race has carried on its mission in this great country of the future.

Even in the fate prepared for him, did St. John the Baptist foreshadow the French-Canadian people. The cold-blooded Herodism of certain political men would gladly decapitate the whole race, in order to satisfy the whims of that dancing, bespangled, syren-voiced, courtesan—religious intolerance. But the hour for such a consummation has not yet struck upon the clock of time. St. John the Baptist was not martyred until his mission on earth was completed. An individual reckons his life by years; a nation counts its period of existence by centuries. Judged by that standard the French-Canadian race is still in its infancy; it has centuries yet to live through before the mission that God has entrusted to it can be accomplished. But when that distant period is reached we feel confident that the children of that nationality would only feel it too great a privilege to pass through the gateway that St. John the Baptist entered, in order to receive the undying crown that awaits all whose missions on earth have been faithfully accomplished. But, in the meantime, the Herods and the dancing girls of our age will have slumbered for centuries in the great mausoleum of oblivion, before the French Canadian's mission is over, before the race is glorified in the completion of its work.

Next week we will speak of the national festival.

THE LONG VACATION.

There is a saying—how true it is we know not—to the effect that "Shakespeare never repeats." We suppose that this assertion is intended as an adverse criticism upon all writers who do repeat. Well, not being Shakespeare, and never expecting to rival him in any way, we feel that we have a perfect right to repeat—at least our own writings, when the occasion requires. A number of our friends have asked us to reproduce the short editorial written by us last year on the eve of the summer vacation. As we don't expect to be able to improve upon our remarks of 1893, and as that editorial applies equally to 1894, and considering that it certainly conveys our views upon the subject, we will give it again to our readers:

The scholastic year has come to an end, the long vacation has commenced. The schools are closed, the class rooms deserted, the books laid aside, the pupils scattered, the teachers gone to seek a well-earned repose; the summer holidays are at hand. If it be necessary that youth should be educated, that long and weary hours should be spent in preparing young minds for the seeds of instruction, that days should be passed in close rooms pouring over pages from which the maxims for future guidance are to be gleaned, equally necessary is it that the mental faculties should enjoy a period of repose wherein to recuperate for the greater exertions of coming years. Not only for the pupils but for the hard-worked teachers are these days of vacation requisite.

The great and fine machinery of the mind wears out by constant efforts, by unceasing pressure, and even as the works of a clock, it requires to be periodically wound up. For the student there is always a great joy in the dawn of vacation. To be released from study for two months is a boon and one that is a necessity. But each vacation brings the pupil nearer to his final exit from school and entry upon the ways of life. As all things in this world eventually come to an end so do the school-days of each boy or girl. To that great graduating day all