

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.

CXXXI.

We have seen how the Springfield Republican correspondent not only will not allow a Catholic writer to treat a religious question from the point of view of his own Church, and will not allow him, without protest, to regard his own Church as superior to other Christian bodies (although this is involved in the very fact of his being Catholic) but how he treats it as a serious grievance, that Bismarck regards Christianity itself, and the Catholic Church as the representative of Christianity, as superior to the other "world-religions," that is, to Judaism, Mohammedanism, Zoroastrianism, Brahminism, or Buddhism, which are the only non-Christian "world-religions" now subsisting.

This seems extraordinary indeed. As the very essence of the claim of Jesus Christ is, that He is the ultimate hope of the world, as being the consummate manifestation of God in humanity, it follows of necessity that whoever receives Him for such, must regard Christianity as superior to all the other great religions, as containing the abundant and fulfillment of that which, they, at best, are but adumbrations, and some of them distortions and deprivations.

It follows then that if the conspire passed by this gentleman upon M. Bismarck is to be self-consistent, the genuine acceptance of Christianity is itself to be viewed as an inexcusable offence. The Government of France itself is coming to this position, but this American writer seems to have anticipated it.

A French author, a zealous adherent of the Government policy, maintains the duty of the authorities, not merely to depress, but finally to extinguish Christianity in France, by rooting out the Catholic Church. That done, he evidently supposes that the few Protestant bodies left will soon disappear of themselves.

The ground on which this French writer maintains the obligation of his Government to root out the Gospel, in its most conspicuous French form of the Catholic Church, is, apparently, not that she has such and such rights, or such and such a polity, or even such and such special doctrines. He seems cheerfully willing to allow her all these. At least he makes no complaint of them. The one essential and unpardonable feature of Christianity, especially as embodied in the Catholic Church, he views as found in its refusal to treat other religions as being on equality with itself, and in its claim of being the religion intended by God for the whole world, before which, therefore, all other systems ought to give way, as either evil or insufficient and antiquated.

He remarks, very truly, that the early Christians, chiefly embodied in the Catholic Church of East and West, might easily have obtained acknowledgment from the Empire, if only they would have accepted the overtures made, at least informally by such sovereigns as Hadrian and Alexander Severus, to establish Christ as a god of the Empire, provided that the Church would receive into her temples the image of the Emperor, and of the three great Capitoline gods, and would offer libations and incense to these. She should also interchange tokens of comity with the other "licit religions" of the Empire, and should explicitly avow her readiness to obey every command of the Emperor, any word of Christ to the contrary notwithstanding. I do not mean that all these details of reconciliation are exact, but they seem near enough so for our present purpose.

He does not seem to care the early Catholics for refusing to entertain these proposals of the Empire. He does not think that they could have done otherwise. The Church could only answer that she could worship but one God, and one incarnate Son of God: that, while she owns that God works in all souls, and that He may go beyond all His promises, she could not recognize any of the heathen systems as authentic organs of His Spirit; and that she could only obey the Emperor so far as he did not contradict the mind of Christ.

Nor does he think that the Catholic Church gives ground of complaint by rendering the same answer to the secular power, when it makes virtually the same demands now. This is the very reason why he desires the extinction of Christianity, because in its very nature, especially as embodied in the Catholic Church, no compromise with it is possible. He owns that Paganism failed in its early assault upon it; but he hopes that Paganism, in its present form of Secularism, detached from all reference to supernatural realities, may be more successful, and either extinguish the Church altogether, or, which would perhaps be still more gratifying, bow down her neck to the acceptance of Gambetta's demand: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

The Republican correspondent, naturally, is less tractable than the Frenchman, as Secularism in this country has not yet gained such pre-emptory strength, but his demand appears to be the same, namely, that Christianity, especially the Catholic Church, shall view herself as simply one of the various equal religions, which she shall not aim to supersede, and toward which she shall sustain the same friendly relations which, for instance, the Catholic monastic orders are expected to bear towards each other. Otherwise the Church is to be viewed as having no moral right to exist.

It evidently could not satisfy this writer's demands that Christian missionaries should own their obligation to treat sincere adherents of all the great pagan religions (Judaism and even Islam, standing in a separate class) with friendly respect, and cordially to acknowledge the masses of truth sometimes found in them. Such obligations are increasingly recognized. There are Buddhist monasteries in which the

visit of a Christian missionary is hailed with the ringing of bells and the sounding of silver trumpets. Such courtesy calls for courtesy in return and receives it. Indeed some think that the Jesuits in the past (hardly in the present) have even overshoot the mark in this direction.

Then again, as to the truth found in some of the chief pagan systems, the last general Catholic Congress in Germany (reported in a Lutheran magazine) has rendered ample justice to the good points in Buddhism than I have ever seen rendered before. Its exposition explains the cordiality with which various Buddhist abbots and monks receive Christian missionaries. Yet all this does not imply that Buddhism is viewed by these missionaries as an equal religion, the permanent continuance of which is to be regarded with complacency. They endeavor to show their Buddhist friends that while the Gospel contains, in a purer, and better balanced, and far more effectual form, the purity, comeliness, justice, unworldliness, it contains infinitely more than is to be found in his system. For the mere hope of deadening the sense of suffering, by suppressing, as far as may be, all thought and feeling, and so drawing near to extinction, the Gospel quickens the moral sense, and welcomes even the appetencies of sin, of which Buddhism has but a feeble sense, notwithstanding the hideousness of its portraiture of hell.

So also, the Gospel, in place of the dreary compassionateness of Buddhism, which the perfect are to outgrow by entering into increasing indifference to being, introduces active benevolence of every form, as towards souls not doomed to extinction, but destined, if they will receive it, to an over-living immortality, whereby they shall be some undying agents of God's

fresh creations.

In the world of upper bills, as Faber expresses it. So also, instead of an endless chain of inexorable fate, leaving each soul to extricate itself, as best it may, from ever recurring reincarnations, by its own unassisted efforts, and promising, even to the few that succeed, only a condition hard to distinguish from non-existence, the Gospel sets forth the Living God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, ever helping the believing soul to every virtue, and strengthening against every vice, until it reaches, not the Nirvana of half-existence, or utter extinction, but the Paradise of Life Eternal, and the Lothe, which, as Schelling says, if it gives to the evil oblivion of all good, gives to the good oblivion of all evil.

Now, however friendly Christians may be, and should be, towards Buddhists, is there any possibility that they can treat the Gospel which they profess to them as merely a somewhat improved version of their own religion, as standing essentially on an equality with it? What can they do except to exhort them adhering to all good things which they now have, to let their faint foreshadowings of redemption be absorbed in the full light of the risen Day? Yet then they incur the censure of our writer as putting the Gospel on the Church on a plane so immensely above the other "world religions." In other words, like M. Bismarck, they are accounted by him inexcusable because, being Christians, they speak and teach as Christians.

CHARLES C. STARRUCK.

Andover, Mass.

THE JUBILEE IN ROME.

MARIAN CONGRESS A MOST INTERESTING FEATURE — THE MASS AND SOLEMN CROWNING IN ST. PETER'S ON DECEMBER 8.

The arrangements for the celebration of the jubilee of the Immaculate Conception are now practically complete, and it is evident that the "Marian Congress" will be one of the most interesting features of the occasion. The organization of the congress has been entrusted to a special commission, under the presidency of Cardinal Vives and Mgr. Radini-Tedeschi. A great many countries will be represented at the congress by distinguished churchmen. Over a hundred manuscript works on the Immaculate Conception and on devotion to Our Lady, many of them important and interesting, have been sent by their authors to the committee. These are now being examined by a select body of reviewers and the most valuable of them will be published in Rome. Famous shrines of the Blessed Virgin all over the world are specially illustrated in this collection of Marian literature, and one interesting paper gives an exhaustive census of Marian periodicals. The sessions of the congress will be held in the vast church of the "XII. Apostoli" and in the halls of the Cancellaria and the Roman Seminary. The opening of the Marian exposition, which will occupy the eight large halls on the first floor of the Lateran palace, has been deferred to November 29, owing to the many important objects which have only lately been promised from Paris, Toulouse, Moulins, Freiburg and several Italian cities.

Of course the great event of the jubilee will be the Papal Mass in St. Peter's on December 8th, and the solemn crowning by Pius X. of the mosaic picture of our Lady in the chapel. On December 8th, 1854, immediately after the Mass, in which the dogma was defined, Pius IX. set a rich crown on this image of our Lady, but the new crown is vastly more precious. It consists of twelve large stars, formed of hundreds of precious stones, and united by an aureole of solid gold. Either during the function in St. Peter's, or on the same day in the Vatican in the presence of the Holy Father, Pius's new "Cantata all'Immacolata" will be sung, and in the evening there will be a general illumination of the houses of Rome.

Self-denial leads to spiritual perfection; self-indulgence to spiritual destruction.

FIVE-MINUTES SERMON.

Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE.

My dear brethren, we shall, on this occasion, occupy the short time allotted to us with some remarks on a most important subject, namely, that of Christian marriage. We ask for your especial attention to what we have to say on this matter, on account of the great bearing which it has on your happiness both here and hereafter, and hope that you will endeavor to understand thoroughly the teaching of the Church regarding it, and that you will resolve not only to obey the laws, but also to follow her suggestions and be governed by her spirit in an affair in which your welfare is so deeply concerned.

The great majority of Christians, as well as of the world in general, are called in the providence of God to the state of marriage; and their calling is as truly a divine vocation as that of others to the religious life and to the priesthood. If, then, the priest or the religious cannot expect to save his soul if he neglects the virtues and the duties proper to his state, neither can those who enter the state of matrimony, if they do not appreciate and endeavor to fulfill the requirements and conditions which God has attached to it; if they rush into it without thought, and remain in it simply from convenience or necessity, without realizing its responsibilities or feeling the burden which it imposes on their consciences.

And yet this is what very many seem to do. Of course we take it for granted that a Catholic, worthy the name, will not marry a person of a different religion. But one should not marry a bad Catholic. Many appear to be indifferent in this matter to their eternal salvation and act as if conscience and religion had nothing to do with it, but they disregard and fling to the winds even the most common and obvious dictates of prudence as to their comfort and peace in this world. What possible hope of happiness in married life, for instance, can a young woman have who unites her destiny with that of a man who is evidently falling, if, indeed, he has not already fallen, into confirmed habits of intemperance; who past and present life gives no assurance of advancement or worldly success, but, on the other hand, every indication of the drunkard's failure, ruin, and degradation? What can she be thinking of who, for a mere fancy or caprice, accepts the offer of one who stands as her protector and support whose selfish and beastly appetites are sure to make him soon trample her under his feet, and treat her merely as a drudge to be starved with her children in order that he may gratify his passion for drink, and to be kicked and beaten if she does not make haste to take for her husband one whose sensual passion is certain soon to extinguish every spark of true love he may have felt for her, and who will, before long, be unfaithful to her for the very reason that made him at first seem faithful?

It is painful to speak of these things; but unfortunately, the frequency of such cases obliges us to do so. Such miseries in marriage cannot be considered, at least in cities like this, as exceptional and extraordinary; no they must be taken into account, not as mere possibilities, but as actual realities. And, of course, there are others which we have not time to enumerate: the ones of which I have spoken will serve as examples. It is, then, the duty of every Christian, before entering into marriage, to make sure as far as possible, to avoid these dangers. It is far better to remain single than to make a bad marriage; let every one, then, before taking this most important of all steps in life, look carefully where it will lead. Let every one, and certainly every Christian, before selecting a companion for life, whose place no one else can take, satisfy himself or herself that the one who is thus selected has the qualities that are calculated to insure happiness to both parties; that he or she has natural virtues and good habits, well and solidly formed; at least industry, sobriety, and those qualities in general which business-men, for example, try to secure in those who are to be charged with matters of less consequence than the support and care of a family.

IMITATION OF CHRIST.

OF THE DAY OF ETERNITY, AND OF THE MISERIES OF THIS LIFE.

Gather my senses together to Thee; make me forget all worldly things; give me the grace speedily to cast away and to despise all wicked imaginations. Come to mine aid, O Eternal Truth, that no vanity may move me. Come, heavenly sweetness, and let all impurity fly from before Thy face. Pardon me also and mercifully forgive me, as when I think of anything else in prayer beside Thee.

For I confess truly, that I am accustomed to be very much distracted. For oftentimes I am not there where I am bodily standing or sitting, but am rather there where my thoughts carry me.

There I am where my thought is, and there oftentimes is my thought where that is which I love.

That thing most readily comes to my mind, which naturally delights me or which through custom is pleasing to me.

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SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION.

By this sacrament we receive the Holy Ghost, together with all His gifts. These are wisdom, understanding, council, fortitude, knowledge, piety and the fear of the Lord. Thus does it become clear that through this sacrament we are made perfect Christians. Likewise does it reveal to us our condition after the sacrament has been administered and the grave necessity of cherishing these superior graces.

In our review of the sacraments in general we saw that each has two essentials, namely, matter and form. Naturally, the question here suggests itself: What are the matter and form in the Sacrament of Confirmation?

The form is the imposition of hands with the holy chrism. The latter consists of the w. r. s. pronounced by the Bishop: I sign thee with the sign of the Cross and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. In administering the sacrament the Bishop extends his hands over those to be confirmed, praying that they may receive the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost above mentioned. This is what is termed the imposition of hands. With his thumb he anoints them with the chrism on the forehead making the sign of the cross and using the words, "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, etc." And finally each is given a light blow on the cheek with the words "Peace be with you." All will readily recognize the presence of the two essentials mentioned.

Just here several matters relating to the sacrament might be suggested with profit. First, the promise of our Lord to send the Holy Ghost to His disciples to sustain them in all their trials. Secondly, the fulfillment of that promise in Jerusalem on Whitsunday. Thirdly, as to what is chrism and the significance of its component parts.

The first two clearly point the institution of the sacrament by our Saviour. The holy chrism is a compound of olive oil and balsam, and is consecrated on Holy Thursday by the Bishop. The oil signifies the sweetness imparted to us by the Holy Ghost; while the balsam represents the odor of virtue which those should spread about them who have received the sacrament. A ready knowledge of these matters is necessary to an intelligent understanding of the sacrament. To learn them in youth and forget them at maturity will have served no purpose.—Church Progress.

MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENT.

M. Combes' friends, or shall we say his masters, for, in speaking of the power of the Freemasons in the Government of France, the latter would seem the more correct term. At any rate, says the Catholic Times, friends or masters, the Freemasons know how to use M. Combes for their own purposes. Here is an instance of it: The Avenir du Tonkin announces that the Governor General has allotted to the Freemasons at Hanoi a sum of five thousand francs for the erection of a temple on the ground belonging to them in the Boulevard Gambetta. Such an event is most significant. It proves the power which the sect possesses, and it disproves the old view, that whatever the Government did against religion at home, it would support the Church in the colonies.

We can easily imagine the outcry that M. Combes would have raised had five thousand piastres been given by a Governor General for the erection of a convent or a monastery. But, of course, in the case of a temple for Freemasons such a gift is right, appropriate and praiseworthy. Only it does not show much neutrality on the Government's part when religious interests are concerned; for the Freemasons are the determined foes of the Church everywhere.—Church Progress.

THE OLD TRAGEDY OF LIFE

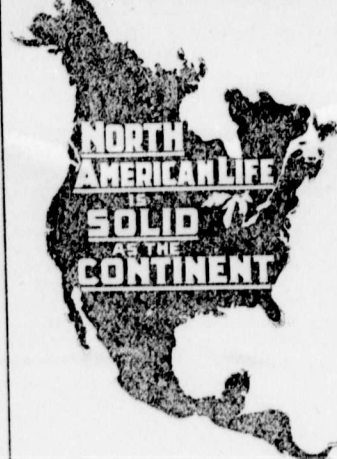
Here, close about us, if we could but open our eyes to see it, is all the interest, tragedy of human life. All that is sublime in the poetry of the past, and strangest or most stirring in its history, has still its counterpart—will have to the end! Daily is paradise lost anew in many a yielding to temptation, from which the soul, ashamed and wretched evermore, goes forth from its happiness, to find the way guarded henceforth by the angel with the flaming sword! Here in these common elements of life about us are conflicts waging, between good and evil, dire as those which stirred the world's old tragedies into sad, stern song! Behind the veil of commonplace which hides the deepest workings of our life from one another lie secrets dark and strange as ever wove the intricate webs of fiction; you never know how near of fiction you may be; you may have them in your hidden life and others know not! You never know the day or hour at which may come to you some opportunity of noblest life or some sharpest alternative of sacrifice and peril.

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