

OUT OF THE CHURCH NO SALVATION.

Philadelphia Catholic Times. There is no doctrine of the Church that has met with more vigorous and indignant protest than that expressed in the above heading; and yet, when properly understood, no doctrine is more evident and reasonable on the hypothesis admitted by all Christians that the will of God is the supreme law for His rational creatures.

We propose to enter somewhat into details and free this doctrine from misconceptions and at the same time show that every one who believes Christ to be the Eternal Son of God and that He established a Church on earth, must also believe that Church is the only ordinary means of salvation, and that those who are not within it are not in the way of salvation.

The teaching of the Church on this subject is: First, that God wills the salvation of all men; second, that no one can be saved but by the merits of Jesus Christ—there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved (Acts iv., 12); third, that he who hears not the Church must be regarded as a heathen and a publican; if he will not hear the Church let him be to thee as the heathen and publican (Matt. xviii., 17); fourth, that he who hears the Gospel preached by the properly commissioned ministers of the Church, according to the order established by God, and who thus hearing refuses to believe, will be condemned. "Go ye," said our Lord, "into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

He that believeth not shall be condemned; fifth, that he who hears those properly commissioned ministers hear Jesus Christ; that he who despises them despises Him, and he who despises Christ despises Him who sent Him. "He that heareth you heareth Me. He that despiseth you despiseth Me. And he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me (Luke x., 17); sixth, that the Church of God is one, both as to doctrine and pastoral ministry; that whoever breaks the unity of doctrine by heresy or the unity of ministry by schism ceases by the fact to be a part of the Church, outside of which there is no salvation.

The reason why there is no salvation outside the Church is simple; thus, he who despised the authority of the Church despises Jesus Christ; he who is a rebel against the Church of Christ is a rebel against Christ Himself; he who rebels against Christ is a rebel against God, and he who is in revolt against God and perseveres in his rebellion cannot be saved. This principle is incontestable. All who recognize the existence of a Supreme Being and His providence, Jew and Christian, Mahomedan and Pagan, recognize at the same time that they cannot resist His commands with impunity.

Much as they disclaim against it, Protestants themselves have recognized the maxim, "Out of the Church there is no salvation."

According to the Helvetic confession of 1566 "there is no salvation outside the Church no more than there is safety outside the ark; if you wish to have life you must not separate from the Church of Jesus Christ."

The Saxon Confession (Art. 12) says: "It is a great consolation for us to know that there are no inheritors of eternal life except in the assembly of the elect (in the Church)."

The Belgic Confession says: "We believe and confess one only Catholic Church (in the Protestant sense). Whoever forsakes this true Church manifestly revolts against the ordinances of God."

The Scotch Confession says: "We firmly believe that Church is one. We utterly detest the blasphemies of those who pretend that all men, by following equity and justice, whatever religion they otherwise profess, shall be saved. For without Christ there is no salvation."

The Catechism of Geneva teaches that "There is nothing but damnation and death for him who is out of the Church." * * * Yes, without doubt, all those who separate from the communion of the faithful, to form a separate sect, must never expect salvation as long as they remain in that state of separation.

Calvin in his Institutes, book iv., chap. 1, says: "Out of the bosom of the Church there is no hope of remission of sins or of salvation."

Pearson, Anglican Bishop of Chester, in his Exposition of the Creed, says: "The Lord has not made two ways to go to heaven; He has not established His Church to save some persons, while others are saved in a different manner."

By "the Church" all these Protestant authorities meant, of course, the Church or sect to which they severally belonged. But that makes no difference. The principle "out of the Church, no salvation," is the same. In this they were perfectly logical, so long as they believed the Church to which they belonged to be the true Church of Christ.

We come now to the meaning of the maxim. We must determine what is meant by "out of the Church," and who is responsible for being out.

It is not true, as Protestants and Infidels are fond of asserting, that Catholics condemn all those who do not belong to the body of the Church. They condemn only those for being out of the Church who are voluntary heretics, schismatics or Infidels: those who will not hear the Church, who despise the Church, and who, knowing its teachings, remain separate from it. They, in obedience to the command of Christ, condemn only those who are obstinately disobedient to the Church of Christ. "If he will not hear the

Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." [Matt. xviii., 17.]

The maxim then, "Out of the Church no salvation," means simply that those Infidels, heretics and schismatics who know the true Church and refuse to enter it become guilty of obstinacy against the will of God. The Church goes no further than this.

According to Catholic theologians, the Church has members hidden in the sects separated from unity. The grace of baptism may be preserved, or, if lost, recovered by the repentance and perfect contrition of those whom good faith, prejudices of early education and morally invincible ignorance still hold in heterodox communions.

The theologians of the University of Paris hold that "children of uneducated parents partake neither of heresy nor schism; that they are excused by their invincible ignorance of the state of things; that they may, with the grace of God, lead a pure and innocent life; that God does not impute to them the errors to which they are attached by an invincible ignorance; that they may thus belong to the soul of the Church with faith, hope and charity.

This explanation is not new or suggested as a means of removing an objection, for both ancient and modern doctors of the Church have taught that one can be in error without being a heretic or without his error having the effect of separating him from the Church. Only those who obstinately remain in error are heretics. He who does not know the doctrines and decisions of the Church is not a heretic, even though he professes heresy. Heresy of this kind is like the sin which one commits through involuntary ignorance; for instance, the breaking of a law of whose existence one is ignorant. In this case the sin is only material, not formal, and is therefore in itself not an obstacle to salvation.

"We must not," says St. Augustine, "rank among heretics those who carefully seek after the truth, and who are in a disposition to embrace it as soon as discovered."

"If," says Chalonier, "error comes from invincible ignorance it excludes from sin of heresy, providing a person be ready to embrace the truth immediately it shall present itself to him."

When these authorities say that those who are in error through no fault of their own are not heretics, they mean that they are still members of the Church. Hence Nicole says: "It is, therefore, true, according to all Catholic theologians, that there is a great number of living members and true children of the Church in communions separated from her; since there are so many infants, who always form a considerable part of them, and since there might also be some among the adults, although she does not pay attention to it because she does not know them."

Commenting on these and other like statements Bishop Trevern, author of the Discussion Amicale, says: "Religion teaches Catholics to judge the doctrines and forbids them to judge the persons of men. Of course, therefore, they maintain the principles and never allow themselves to condemn those who are out of their Church; they leave them to the judgment of God. He alone knows the bottom of the heart and the graces that He gives; He alone can judge the actual disposition of the souls that He calls to His tribunal. This doctrine is conformable with the spirit of Christianity, and shows to great advantage the extent of Catholicity, whilst it forbids us to mark out its precise boundaries. It also fully exculpates Catholics from that imputation of enmity and spirit of intolerance which people are fond of lodging against them."

What has been said thus far relates to those who have received the sacrament of baptism. We will now consider the case of those who are not baptized, such as Jews, Mahomedans and Pagans. The unbelief of those may be of three kinds, namely, positive, private and negative. It is positive in those who despise and reject the teaching of the Gospel when it is made known to them; private in those who are culpably ignorant of the divinity of Christianity; and negative in those who never heard of Christianity. Those of the first and second kinds are not free from guilt, because their unbelief is voluntary, deliberate, formal. Of these two classes of unbelievers our Lord spoke when He said: "If I had not come and spoken to them they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin." [John xv., 22.] That is after the Gospel had been preached to them. The nature of their sin can be seen from the following text: "All the day long have I spread My hands to a people that believeth not and contradicted Me." [Romans x., 21.] Those of the third class, that is, whose unbelief is negative, are not to be condemned, because their unbelief is the result of involuntary ignorance of causes over which they have no control. Referring to this last class, St. Paul asks: "How, then, shall they call on Him [the Lord] in whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" [Romans x., 14.] The Church has solemnly condemned the proposition that purely negative infidelity is a sin in those to whom the Gospel has not been preached.

In reference to unbelief the Church condemns only those who despise and reject Christ in rejecting the Gospel when announced to them.

It can be affirmed without fear of running counter to the decisions of the Church that unbelievers who have not

known the gospel are in the same state in which the Gentiles were before the coming of the Messiah. They have no other duties to fulfil in religion and morals than those which they know from the natural law and from traditions, more or less mutilated, concerning God, Divine Providence, the promise, more or less confused, of a Redeemer and the existence of another life. The Saviour came not for the destruction but for the salvation of the world. We cannot suppose that salvation became impossible to whole nations from the moment that the Redeemer consummated the work of the redemption of the human race.

The unbeliever who accepts as coming from God all that he knows of the true religion, and who sincerely desires to know the will of God, believes by that fact implicitly what Christians believe. And his faith, however imperfect, being the effect of a grace denied to no one, can absolutely suffice to salvation. If then he knows the law of God, so far as he knows it, he will work out his salvation. But he will be saved in the Church, to the soul of which he belongs by the interior gifts of grace.

It is true he cannot enter into the kingdom of God save by baptism. But theologians, according to the spirit of the gospel and the teaching of the fathers, distinguish three kinds of baptism—the baptism of water, the baptism of desire and the baptism of blood. Now the baptism of desire, or the desire of baptism, in him who loves God above all things, supplies the sacrament. The Council of Trent teaches that baptism is necessary in fact or in desire—in *revel in voto*. (Session vi., ch. iv.) An implicit desire of baptism is that desire one has who, having no knowledge of baptism, is disposed to do all that God requires of him as a means of salvation. Many doctors of the Church can be cited in support of this view; among them St. Thomas and St. Liguori, who require in default of baptism an implicit desire of the sacrament, together with a perfect love of God.

In affirming the necessity of baptism for the spiritual regeneration of man, the Church regards it as necessary only from the time the Gospel is promulgated; *post promulgatum evangelium*, says the Council of Trent. Now this promulgation has not been simultaneous but successive. The law of baptism could not then have been obligatory on all men at the same time. Could so many people who could know nothing of the Gospel or of baptism until many centuries after the death of the apostles be left without any means of salvation? Did the primitive remedies which the patriarchs had against original sin suddenly fail everywhere the moment baptism was instituted or from the moment of its promulgation in certain places by the apostles? We may believe that these primitive remedies retained their validity among the Gentiles as long as the law of the Gospel was not sufficiently promulgated among them. The blessings of the Gospel which we possess have not made the condition of those who know not the Gospel worse than it was before the coming of the Redeemer.

In conclusion the Church condemns only those who are formally, that is voluntarily, infidels, heretics or schismatics; only those who through pride reject the Gospel and refuse to hear that Church of which Christ said, "He that will not hear the Church let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." Such is the sense of the maxim "Out of the Church no salvation."

The Month of May.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin has been, from the earliest ages of the Church, considered one of the most important points of Catholic doctrine, and one of the most efficacious means of obtaining the grace of God. It is founded on the cardinal principle, that, as all honor comes from God, those who have been most highly favored by the Most High, deserve the highest reverence and respect from their fellow creatures. And as Mary, by becoming the mother of Jesus Christ, who was at once God and man, was exalted above and beyond the rest of the children of Adam, she is necessarily entitled to the greatest veneration of the human race. By honoring her, we do not detract in the slightest from the supreme worship which we pay to God alone; on the contrary, by giving Her our love and respect, we indirectly praise the Lord, who has seen fit to elevate our human nature, by raising one of the daughters of Eve to the high office of Mother of God.

Hence, following the example of the Archangel Gabriel, who saluted Mary with the title "full of Grace," the Church has at all times evinced an anxious desire that Her children should pay a fitting heed of respect to Mary, Mother of God.

Of one thing we may rest assured and it is, that there is no more effectual way of acquiring the blessing of perseverance in the grace of Jesus than by devoutly honoring and piously invoking the help and protection of Mary, His Mother.

We should, therefore, resolve to make good and earnest efforts to spend this month of May in holiness of life and purity of conduct, in imitation of the example given us by the Saints of God, who were all devout clients of the Blessed Virgin to whose intercession they have attributed their continuance in the holy work and their triumph over the snares of evil. And we, too, if we but follow their example in this respect will experience, in abundant manner, the power and efficacy of her who is justly, styled the Help of Christians and the Refuge of Sinners.

THE BIBLE AND THE SUPERNATURAL.

The New York Sun, commenting on the tendency to skepticism and unbelief in the supernatural, says:

"The transformation in Protestant belief, more particularly during the last ten years alone, has been unexampled in the history of Christianity."

This is no doubt true, but the Sun errs in accounting for it. A writer in the Forum attributes this change to "a slow but perceptible movement in the direction of the intellectual and somewhat away from the more emotional aspects of the subject." The Sun, commenting on this proposition, says: "That means that it has been away from faith." Now it is not true that a movement from the emotional towards the intellectual is a movement away from faith, for faith is not an emotional but a purely intellectual act, an assent to the truth for adequate motives, a conviction resting on the highest evidence that can be presented to the intellect as a motive of inference.

The writer in the Forum is equally wrong in attributing the decadence of faith in the Protestant world to a change from an emotional to an intellectual view of religion. The decadence of faith is the logical result of the fundamental principle of Protestantism, private judgment, the rejection of a supernatural authority in things supernatural. From the time that this principle was proclaimed there has been nothing but discord among those who adopted and put it into practice. A false principle once implanted in society will sooner or later pass through the process of evolution, and work out logically its evil results. The false, like the true, has its laws of development, the one for evil, the other for good. If the false principle of private judgment in matters of religion, introduced by the so-called reformers of the sixteenth century, has not as yet landed in pure skepticism it is because of the positive and preservative influence of the Catholic Church in the Christian world.

The Sun, continuing its criticism, says:

"Instead of believing without question, even people of spiritual attentiveness are now examining the evidences of the supernatural in a cool, intellectual and scientific spirit which is essentially opposed to faith."

The assumption here that the faithful must believe without question is gratuitous. Every one who has the intellectual capacity to believe anything whatever must have some reason, good or bad, for doing so. He must question and find some reason for giving his intellectual assent or he cannot give it. This is a law of the mind, without which it cannot act, whatever may be the subject of its contemplation.

The assumption that faith is essentially opposed to a cool, intellectual, scientific spirit is equally gratuitous and can be accounted for in the Sun only by the fact announced by telegraph that Mr. Dana is in Berlin. It is a modern fal, this attempting to make skepticism identical with a cool, intellectual, scientific spirit of inquiry.

Speaking of what it regards as the "cool, intellectual and scientific spirit," the Sun says:

"It disregards the source whence that belief (in the supernatural) is derived by discrediting the Bible as a book written by inspiration of God."

This statement is evidently not the result of that cool, intellectual and scientific spirit of which the writer speaks as if it were an old neighbor of his; for if he had reflected he would have recognized the fact that the Bible is not, and from the nature of things cannot be, the source of belief in the supernatural. Belief in the Bible presupposes a belief in the supernatural, as revelation presupposes a revealer, the act the agent. The truth, then, is precisely the opposite of what the Sun asserts, namely, belief in the supernatural is the source of belief in the Bible. It is this belief in the supernatural that makes belief in the supernatural origin of the Bible possible, for one cannot believe the Bible to be the Word of God until he believe that God is; and as God is the supernatural—and all there is of it—to believe in Him is to believe in the supernatural. Hence, if Dr. Briggs and other skeptical critics were to destroy the Bible as a divine revelation, they would not in the least effect logically the belief in the supernatural, though no doubt they would give a severe blow to the faith of those who believe in the Bible alone as the sole rule of faith, as the only means of knowing the will of God.

The Sun continues thus:

"Under such circumstances it is inevitable that the faith in the future life that is derived solely from the Bible and based on Scriptural authority alone, should give way to mere speculation, the subject being one of which men can know nothing except by inspiration from God."

Here the writer confounds belief in the supernatural with a knowledge of the will of the supernatural. Belief in the supernatural does not depend on the Bible, nor does it depend on revelation at all, in the ordinary acceptance of that term. Men believed in God before He said to Moses, "I am who am." God affirms Himself directly to the intellect, otherwise He could never be known, for no created medium could affirm Him to the mind, as the finite cannot induce the idea of the infinite. It is in the light of this divine and immediate affirmation that human reason can apprehend the Supreme Being without the medium of book or prophet. God can be known by reason. But while reason can lead to the knowledge of the existence of

God, it cannot lead to a full knowledge of what that existence implies; in other words, it cannot lead to a knowledge of the will of God. To know this revelation is necessary in some form, written or unwritten.

We have italicized certain words in the above quotation to draw attention to the difference in the position of the Catholic and the Protestant. The Sun is certainly right in saying that a belief in a future life which depends solely on the Bible, on Scriptural authority alone, must fall when belief in the Bible fails. On the Protestant principle there is no other means of knowing the will of God; that means failing, the connection is broken. With the Catholic it is different. He believes that the Son of God established a living Church to teach all nations, with His authority, a Church cannot err. He believes all this independently of the Bible as an inspired book. He believes all this not with credulity, but with reason. Hence he is not frightened by the critics. If all the Bibles in existence were suddenly annihilated the catastrophe would not effect his faith. The Church of Christ will stand till the end of time, teaching all nations.—Philadelphia Catholic Times.

Eucharistic League.

A society of American priests and prelates has been started, the object of which is to promote the Eucharistic life. They have adopted the name of the "Priests' Eucharistic League." The members pledge themselves: 1stly, to spend at least one hour every week in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; 2ndly, to further, by all means in their power, practical devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

Arrangements have been made by the bishops and priests who are members of the league for a conference next summer at Notre Dame, which is likely to result in a Eucharistic Congress in 1895. Those who are aware of the admirable results of the congresses held in the Old World will rejoice to hear of the proposed convention, and pray for its success. No set programme has yet been arranged for this preliminary meeting; but we learn that on the first day Pontifical High Mass will be celebrated by the Most Rev. Archbishop of Cincinnati, and a sermon preached by the Right Rev. Bishop of Covington. In the evening there will be an hour of adoration in common. The day following, a Pontifical Mass of Requiem will be celebrated by the Right Rev. Bishop of Fort Wayne. The convention will close most appropriately with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

It is none too soon to arrange for a Eucharistic Congress next year, and it is assuring to know that the preparations for it have been conceived in the spirit of the first promoters of the movement. There will be no outcry in the newspapers, but silent prayer before the Tabernacle; no noisy harangues, but only spiritual conferences.—Ave Maria.

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