

UNITY OF THE ROMAN CHURCH.

By Rev. J. Spencer Northcote, D.D., in "Fourfold Difficulties of Anglicanism."

V.

Thus, the seed of all Catholic theology may be said to be the one great truth of the Incarnation; the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; "perfect God and perfect Man, yet not two, but one Christ;" this is the centre round which every detail in the cycle of Catholic doctrine moves in harmonious sympathy; this is the one fundamental idea on which is based the edifice of faith—or rather, the vivifying principal which, by animating every individual part, binds all together into one living whole. That the essential doctrines of the mediation and the atonement flow immediately from it, is obvious to all, even from the letter of the Holy Scripture itself; and deeper reflection will show us that it has a no less real and necessary connection with the nature and efficacy of the sacraments, with the doctrine of a visible and infallible Church, with the intercession and invocation of saints, with the especial prerogative of the Blessed Virgin Mother, with the veneration of relics, and every article of the Catholic faith. All these are most intimately interwoven with it and with each other: the same *theandric* principle, as it is called by German theologians, runs through them all, and distinctly marks them as parts of one indivisible whole. And, because the more harmonious the mechanism of a system, the less will it bear rough handling; therefore, those who once presume to subject this divinely constituted creed to a critical examination, choosing this portion and rejecting that, soon find that they have loosened the whole fragment of belief in their mind, and that, if they will be consistent, and not rest in broken theories, they must go on to the denial of Revelation itself. The biography of Blanco White is a melancholy instance of the truth of this remark; so are the lives of many other apostates, all demonstrating, by the sure testimony of experience, that there is no trustworthy resting-place to a logical mind between obedience to the Catholic on one side and infidelity on the other. Testimony to the same truth has been borne by the experience (only in a contrary direction) of many recent converts; they first received the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and then were gradually led to feel its incompleteness without the sacrament of penance, and to see the "logical necessity" of belief in purgatory; they were taught to acknowledge the Real Presence, and soon felt that adoration of the Host was involved in that acknowledgment; and so on, through many close and subtle links, until at length they embraced, in theory at least, the larger portion, if not the whole, of the Catholic creed, before they recognized the authority of the Catholic Church; and this because, throughout the whole length and breadth of the Catholic system, there is the strictest logical coherency of each and every part. Nay, the history of the English Church bears testimony to the same truth; when she separated from the Universal Church, though she deliberately rejected much of its doctrine, yet she meant to assign certain limits to the working of the spirit of scepticism which she had thus evoked; but what has been the result? She wished to cast off what she called Romish superstition; her children have also "cast off that reverence and obedience which the law of God requires." She proposed to discontinue the Catholic practice of invocation of saints and angels; her children have "lost all practical feeling of the communion of saints, and, like the Sadducees of old, have learned almost to forget or deny the existence of angels or spirits." She dreaded "too great an exaltation of the Sacraments;" her children "deny or explain away the doctrine of baptismal regeneration." She objected to the "abuses of the Mass;" her children have been led to "degrade the holy sacrament into a mere sign of a thing absent." She rejected the supremacy of the Pope; her children have been led into a practical disregard of episcopal authority; and so on, in the same way, through every detail of Christian faith and practice. Nay, the very doctrine of the Incarnation itself has become the subject of unhalloved disputations or secret disbelief: "Arianism was taught with impunity in our community in the last century," is the confession of an English clergyman; and a late Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford publicly professed his belief that two-thirds of the clergy were (unconscious) Nestorians. Now, as we have before said, to this logical coherency of the Roman system of doctrine, that of the Church of England forms a melancholy contrast: so far from the holding one of her doctrines making it necessary to hold all, some of them are so incongruous that belief in one absolutely precludes belief in another; for instance, if a man heartily receives the doctrine of justification by faith alone, he cannot in earnest believe in baptismal regeneration, nor the Real Presence in the eucharist, nor, indeed, in the sacramental principal at all; which belief the Church of England nevertheless inculcates in her liturgy as undoubtedly as, in her articles, she enforces the doctrine of justification by faith.

Another, and not less important, cause of the unity of the Roman Church is to be found in her living and energetic authority. It has been well said, that "firmness of belief can only be produced by the recognition of some outward and permanent teaching authority;" an authority which shall determine the limits within which doubt or speculation may have scope, while it keeps the sacred deposit of the faith

whole and undefiled. Such an authority is the Catholic Church to her children; and she has no shrinking no hesitation in enunciating her claim to be such. She stands forth fearlessly as the one representative of her Lord on earth, the sole living exponent of His will, and "dispenser of His gifts; indefectible, because the promise standeth sure, "I will be with you always even to the end of the world;" infallible, because inspired by the Spirit of Truth; and bearing on her standard the awful denunciation. "He that despiseth you despiseth Me." That such authority belonged to the Apostles, none, I suppose, will question; and that same authority that the Church claims as her own, by virtue of her succession from them. From her, therefore, the Catholic receives the faith, even as she received it from God, not making himself its judge, not criticizing its details, nor submitting them to any test of his own choosing, but in full unhesitating confidence, as from an inspired teacher; "the faith" to him is not an opinion of his own mind, it is something out of himself, positive, dogmatic, complete, and immutable; and his reception of it is not an act of eclecticism, but of faith.

That is recognition of an infallible authority must necessarily result in unity of doctrine, is obvious to all; and it is equally obvious, how greatly the state of the English Church contrasts in this particular with that of the Catholic. We have already remarked on the hesitating, self-contradictory way in which she asserts her authority; and how little that authority is recognized by the majority of her children, you yourself would be the first to lament; but you would not perhaps be so ready to admit, that the language used on this subject by the school to which you belong is quite as subversive of the principle of Church authority—at least, as that principle is understood by Catholics—as any of which you complain in the evangelical party; not only do you speak of your bishops with contempt, and of your articles as a tyranny, to be evaded until it can be thrown off; but you talk of infusing this or that spirit into the Church, of introducing into her such and such doctrines and practices, nay, of "Catholicizing" her, as if the Church were a passive thing, to be moulded at your will, instead of a living power, instinct with the spirit of wisdom—as if her children were the channels of God's truth to her, not she to them.

But enough has been said on the subject of unity: I will only remind you, in conclusion, that the Church in which, as we have seen, it has no place, consists of a single nation; while that Church, of which it is the striking characteristic, is composed of many nations, peoples, and languages, diverse in all besides—some of them in this world's interests hostile to each other—but all one in her; "out of many nations one people," submitting to one discipline, governed by one head, holding the one faith, in unity of spirit and in the bond of peace.

A CATHOLIC PRIEST ON EDUCATION.

In an address delivered before the sisters' school at Santa Cruz, Cal., a few days ago, Rev. Hugh McNamee said: I need not tell you that the education question is one of great importance, and commands, as it should, great attention, nor is it necessary to add that in relation to it we Catholics, or rather the Catholic church, is subjected to unlimited and inexcusable misrepresentation. We are slandered without rule or measure, with but little regard for decency or truth, not by the rank and file of our non-Catholic fellow-citizens, to whose liberal spirit I can myself bear testimony, but by certain speakers and writers who are constantly fomenting a spirit which every good man should strive to allay, who appear governed in what they say by a desire to render odious those who conscientiously differ from them, and the overflowing majority of Christianity in that.

These misrepresentations may take from us a few of our weaker members, and keep many non-Catholics from entering our fold, but for the future of our church we need not fear. A church whose Divine Founder said would last to the end of time, which is deeply rooted in the hearts and convictions of over 250,000,000 of human beings, including men of every race and of every condition from the King to the beggar, of which Macaulay, a distinguished and highly-educated non-Catholic, says "no other institution is left standing which carries the mind back to the times when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon, and when cameleopards and tigers bounded in the Flavian amphitheatre;" a church in fine which for nineteen centuries has weathered every storm, and is, perhaps, stronger today than at any previous period of her existence, is not likely to give way under calumnies so extravagant as to almost bear their own refutation. Nevertheless, we do not like to be lowered in the estimation of our Protestant and other non-Catholic fellow-citizens.

The Catholic church is said, by those to whom I have referred, to be the enemy of education, to have made efforts to keep the masses in ignorance. This statement, strange to say, is extensively made and almost constantly repeated here, with the fact before our eyes that we Catholics are, of all others, making immeasurably the greatest sacrifice for education, since we, though having to pay our portion of the public school tax, erect where able our own schools at our own expense.

To form anything like a just estimate of how highly the Catholic church has valued education, it is necessary to take into account not