

Northwest Review.



"AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM."

THE ONLY CATHOLIC PAPER PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH IN NORTH-WESTERN CANADA.

VOL. XII, No. 35.

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 1897.

\$2.00 per year.
Single Copies, 5 cents.

PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH.

We come to thee, O blessed Joseph, in our sore distress, and having sought the help of thy most blessed spouse, we now confidently implore thy assistance also.

We humbly beg that, mindful of the dutiful affection which bound thee to the immaculate virgin mother of God and of the fatherly love wherewith thou dost cherish the child Jesus, thou wilt lovingly watch over the heritage which Jesus Christ purchased with His blood, and of thy strength and power help us in our urgent need.

O Most Provident Guardian of the Divine Family, protect the chosen race of Jesus Christ; drive far from us, most loving Father, every pest of error and corrupting sin; from Thy place in Heaven, most powerful deliverer, graciously come to our aid in this conflict with the power of darkness; and, as old thou didst deliver the child Jesus from supreme peril of life, so now deliver the Holy Church of God from the snares of her enemies and from all adversity, have each of us always in thy keeping, that, following thy example and borne up by thy strength, we may be able to live happily, die happily, and so enter into the everlasting bliss of heaven. Amen.

An indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines for each recital of the above prayer. (Pope Leo XIII, August 15, 1889.)

A MOST BEAUTIFUL SERMON

THE WAY OF SALVATION.

Why the Catholic Church is Entitled to Such a Claim.

The Rev. Father Villiers of Birmingham, Eng., preaching on a recent Sunday morning to a crowded congregation at Stoke-on-Trent, took as his text: "If a man will not hear the Church let him be to you as a heathen and a publican." (Matt. xviii, 17.) He said:

Our Divine Lord came to save souls. "God so loved the world as to send His only begotten Son to save the world." The Church of Jesus Christ exists for the same purpose, and whatever else she may do for men in the course of her action on society, she ever has that great aim in view, and to it subordinates all other things. The rise and fall of dynasties are to her of less importance than the salvation or loss of a soul. For with her Divine Founder she holds—"What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" Not, of course, that there is anything human—be it joy or sorrow—that is above or beneath her deep concern. Did not Christ Himself have compassion on the multitudes—the sick, the halt and the mourners—and sanctify by His presence the gladness of the marriage feast? But He was above all the Good Shepherd, Who sought out sinners, and that which He had of most value—His life—He gave not for men's bodies, but for their souls. "Greater love than this no man hath than that he lay down his life for his friend." As Christ died for souls so now does the Church live for them; to teach them the way of salvation, to enable them to pursue after and attain it. And she, and she alone, is the revealed way of salvation.

I am not ignorant that this is a claim on the part of the Church which causes her enemies to blaspheme and those outside her generally to look on her as arrogant and narrow. But there are few of her doctrines which are less understood and in which she is more misrepresented than in this. And it is to remedy this, if I may, that I am now speaking. Now, in the very beginning I want you to note carefully my proposition, namely, the Church is the only revealed way of salvation. I lay stress on the word "revealed." And by revealed I mean the way made known to men by God as intended by Him for men's salvation. Whatever ways God may have in His mercy for saving souls outside the visible community of His Church we know not, for He has not revealed them to us, and none but His revealed way is safely to be depended upon. Mind, I do not for a moment say that no Baptist, nor Congregationalist, nor Wesleyan, nor Salvationist, nor any member of the scores of various persuasions that exist in this country, will be saved. No; God forbid! If I were to say this I should not be teaching Catholic doctrine. But what I do say is, that all such who may be saved are saved in spite of, not in consequence of, these various "isms." Whilst on the other hand all those who, having been on this earth members of the visible body of the Church, are now or in the future shall be, counted in that host no man can

number in heaven, are all there in consequence of their Catholic faith and the graces and helps that Church gave them.

The Catholic Church, then, says nothing about the fate of the individual. God alone can judge that; but he does form judgment on systems and on doctrines. Against these she ever protests and warns her children when such doctrines or systems are either opposed to her own or fragmentary copies posing as complete and original. And among such in the first place, she condemns the indifferentism so prevalent to-day. She has, then, no part nor sympathy with those who say: "It does not matter what a man believes so long as he does right, keeps his name out of the records of the police courts, pays 20 shillings in the pound, and lives correctly; he will get to heaven in the end." Or again, "One religion is as good as another; we are all making for the same place; God has no creed; perish creeds which divide men; long live the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of men!" I need not go on with these catch-phrases; you know them well enough; they pass current as Gospel truths among many men. Thousands build up their religious life upon them, and trust their eternity upon them as on a foundation. The Catholic Church is the sworn foe of such doctrines and their spirit. She says they are against common sense and reason, and they have no warrant in Scripture. In fact, their very opposite is plainly and distinctly taught us by God's word. They are against common sense by the fact that God is the God of truth—truth being His very essence and "He hateth a liar." To say, then, that God cares not what men believe—truth or falsehood; that He will give them eternal life whether they accept His truth or whether they reject it, is an insult to His very nature.

Again, God has created men capable of knowing and loving Him.

These are the two great faculties of their souls which most lift them above the brutes. If then man is to serve God with his whole soul, he must submit his intellect to believe God's truth, and his will to obey God's commands. God is not satisfied with half measures. He requires the service of the whole soul. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul." To say that God looks only to our moral actions is to declare that He asks only the service of our will. Whilst, on the other hand, to maintain that we are saved by belief alone—that good works are of no avail and are simply tokens or fruits of faith—is to deny that God asks for the worship of our wills. The Catholic Church, then, holds both these ideas to be against the very dictates of reason, whilst if we turn to Revelation we find that these ideas so very common nowadays are equally opposed to and contradicted by God's written Word.

There are, as St. Peter tells us, many things in the sacred Scriptures that are hard to understand, and which "the unstable wrest to their own destruction," but there are also very many which are perfectly clear and plain, so that he who runs may read. But in neither of these classes is to be found the doctrine, "It does not matter what a man believes," nor anything like it. But it is certainly very clear indeed that Christ came to teach men the truth of God and to enable them to do His will, that He was full of grace and truth, and of His fulness have we all received. It is also very clear that He had many truths for men, and that He was very anxious that they should know them. For He sent His Apostles for that very purpose: "Go ye, teach all nations all things, whatsoever I have commanded you." Not one or two principal truths, not a stock from which men could pick and choose; no, but "all things, whatsoever I have commanded you." Nay more, so anxious is Christ for His Revelation and so many are the truths to be taught that it needs the Holy Spirit of Truth, to bring them to the Apostles' minds and to complete their number. "When He, the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, shall come He shall teach you all truth and bring to your mind whatsoever things I have delivered to you." But if it does not matter what a man believes then all this anxiety, all this care and forethought and labor on the part of Our Lord and His Disciples was uncalled for and useless.

We learn again in the Sacred Scriptures that the Apostles, in order to carry out this request of Our Lord, exposed themselves to long wearying labors and journeys, great sufferings, perils, and finally martyrdom. And St. Paul declared, Woe was it to him if he did not preach the Gospel. But if what are called nowadays broad views on religion are true views, then indeed were the Apostles fooled to the full of their bent; and their Divine Master was a deceiver of His closest friends—which no one

can say without blasphemy. The Catholic Church also advances the opposition of the manifest teaching of the New Testament against those numerous forms of evangelicism which hold that belief in the Lord Jesus Christ is enough for salvation and will most certainly secure it. It matters not whether by belief is here understood faith that Christ is God and Saviour of mankind, or whether a special trust and confidence in the certain application of His saving merits to your soul, which confidence is the seal of your salvation. For this latter is what is often meant by believing in or on Christ casting all our sins on Him: To both these views the Church replies: The Sacred Scriptures witness that these things are not of themselves sufficient to salvation. For the Scriptures all add to faith, Baptism, sorrow for sin, hope, love of God, keeping the Commandments, the Sacraments—perseverance in the doctrines of the Apostles, obeying the Church, following in the faith of the pastors, and so on.

Nor does it follow that because the Jews were told that faith in Christ was needed for their salvation, therefore that is all we require. For our position is different. A Jew already believed in penance, in the Commandments, in Sacramental ordinances, in sacrifices, in priesthood, in authority teaching, etc., and looked forward to the Messiah not as one bringing all these things to naught, but rather as the Perfecter of the law by a more perfect covenant. Such a one had only therefore to supplement his existing faith with a belief in the divine character of Jesus and His Messiahship and its consequences, to become a perfect disciple. It was then quite natural for St. Peter to reply thus to such a one, asking what he must do to be saved, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized." And as to the idea that "once saved always saved," it is only needful to point out that only "he who perseveres to the end shall be saved;" that according to St. Paul there are "who having made void their first faith have damnation;" "some who have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost and are fallen away;" that St. Paul himself "a vessel of election," was afraid of being "a castaway."

Then from the Scriptural facts which condemn the doctrine that it does not matter what a man believes, etc., it is also evident that a man is not a Christian simply because he thus calls himself, or is born in a country rejoicing in that name, or condescends to give his mental acceptance to some few of the many truths which Christ is generally held to have taught. And again, it is equally clear that Christianity is not merely the sum of the various contradictory religious persuasions, which call themselves Christian, but is according to the Scriptures most strictly limited to one and only one form of religion from amongst the various claimants of the title. Christianity of the Scriptures is nothing more nor less than the religion which Christ taught and wished to be believed, which the Apostles preached, which their disciples accepted and practised.

To teach anything contrary to this religion or to hold less is plainly to be not a follower of Christ, but of some human teacher. Whilst to refuse to accept all that Christ taught is clearly to be outside of the fold of Christ. Jesus Christ founded His religion that His work might be carried on. And just in the same way that the Jews who refused to believe in Christ were lost, so also all those who refuse to listen to His church are outside the hope of eternal life. For if "a man will not hear the Church, let him be to you as a heathen and a publican." And the church, as we have seen, is plainly not every individual man's private opinion, but that divine society of teachers which Christ established, namely, His apostles and their successors. At all events, if they are not the Church, nothing else is. And the necessity of believing the teaching of Christ in its entirety, and not merely such fragments as commend themselves to our ideas is set forth in no uncertain terms by St. Paul when he says, "Even if an angel from heaven should teach a gospel other than I have preached to you, let him be anathema."

But no one will say that the gospel preached by St. Paul is identical with that of those who say baptism is necessary, and with that of those who say it is not, with that of the men who teach that faith is sufficient, and of those who insist on the need of working out our salvation with fear and trembling. No; of these various systems it is clear only one can be that of Christ and his apostles. The now wide opinion that the gospel of Christ is what each one thinks best, is a new-fangled and erroneous idea, that no one dreamt of before the sixteenth century. And when we pass

to details of the gospel of Christ, no one who has even a passing acquaintance with the New Testament can deny that our salvation depends upon our being reconciled with God through Jesus Christ, being separated from the world, and made holy by adoption of sons through baptism, and by the receiving and help of grace to persevere. We need, therefore, the whole truth as it is in Christ Jesus that we may believe, the knowledge of His will that we may do it; His grace that we may possess the supernatural life and keep it.

Now for these very ends it is certain that Christ founded a divine society—His church. To this society, to which He gave the Holy Spirit as guide, teacher and sanctifier, which He commanded all men to listen to as to Himself belongs the destiny of carrying out His work. Christ has revealed to us no other means; He has founded no other society. To his church He has committed in express words, "The stewardship of truth and the means of grace;" her He has chosen and loved. Christ says St. Paul, also "loved the Church and delivered Himself up for her, that He might sanctify it, cleanse it by the laver of water in the word of life, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle nor any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." If then, we want truth we must go to the Church; if we want grace we must seek it at her hands.

All this is the clear revelation of Jesus Christ. All religious systems then outside that divine society are not revealed ways of salvation, for they owe their origin to men; their founders are known to us; they are Calvin, or Luther, or Wesley, and so on. But any system of religion starting at a period later than Christ and His apostles is manifestly not Christianity, but a human product. Its authority, then, is human, not divine; its helps to sanctification are merely natural not supernatural; they are but such as are common to all men, Jews and heathens as well as Christians. They move the soul by reason or by the emotions, but they give it no new life, no spiritual power; they infuse no grace of the Holy Spirit. They may be religious societies if you will but they are not the Church of Christ to which He gave the promises and the powers, and authority. To believe them is not to adhere to Christ; and not to have faith in Christ is to be outside His fold and eternal life. We only believe in Christ by believing in His Church. "He who heareth you heareth Me, and he who despiseth you despiseth Me." And at this point an inquiring mind will naturally demand: "How then is it even possible for anyone to be saved outside of the Catholic Church, yet did you not admit at the beginning that some non-Catholics would probably be saved?" I answer, first it is not possible for anyone to be saved unless they be in some way or other members of the church; at least we have no divine assurance that it is otherwise possible.

This is the only revealed way and to be out of that way through one's own fault is certainly to be lost. But as to those who are out of the visible communion of the Church, not, however, through their own fault, or whom we say, they may by God's mercy still be made members of His Church, even if not of its visible communion. "The mercy of God is above all His works," we none of us may set bounds or limits to it. But even the ways of His mercy lead into the fold of His Church, and thus to salvation through the Church. For we are made members of the Church not only by baptism, but by the desire of it or by the possession of such dispositions toward God as would prompt us to seek baptism did we realize its necessity. It may thus be that all who though not baptized by water, still live up to their lights, are by their very dispositions, members of the Church, by will if not by deed. For although it is true that "he who believes and is baptized shall be saved," it is also true that "if any man will love me, I and the Father will love him."

But those whom Christ and the Father love cannot be lost so long as that bond of love joins them to God. To say the opposite is to utter blasphemy. Yes, but what is the proof that a man loves Christ? Jesus Himself gives it. "If any man love Me he will keep My commands." But the commands of Jesus are these: "Believe and be baptized;" "Do penance for your sins;" "Hear the Church;" "Persevere in the doctrines of the Apostles;" "Obey your pastors;" Unless a man eat My flesh and drink My blood he shall not have life in him." No one is a lover of Christ if he refuses to do these things if he knows or should know them to be of obligation. But a man may possibly be ignorant of these obligations, or even imagine that he is fulfilling them when he is not. In either case it is surely not too much to say that God owes it to His mercy and

His promises to take this man's will for the deed, to look upon him as a member of the Church just as much as if he were in her visible body. For of a certainty it is no sin for a man to be born a Jew or a heathen and reared in ignorance of the truth, and if such a one is lost it is not his ignorance which will have condemned him, but his own personal sins, against the light of his own conscience. But to be outside the visible body of Christ's church through one's own fault is most certainly to be self-condemned. And here, then, comes the crucial question which each man's heart alone can answer and on which depends his eternal happiness. How far is ignorance and good faith, and conscience, answerable for a man not being a Catholic; and how far is it love of friends, or riches, or honor, or pleasure, or even pride or indolence, or love of ease, in fact the thousand and one things which lead men to neglect obvious duties, which has prevented this or that man from entering the one ark of salvation, the one fold, the one faith and baptism of the one Lord. "God wishes all to come to the knowledge of His truth and be saved." He gives each one grace sufficient for his salvation, but not all, alas, accept that grace and use it; not all follow the leading of His light.

And finally it may now perhaps be asked, if men may possibly be saved outside of the Catholic Church, that is outside of its visible communion, why disturb them? Why not leave them alone where they are? The first answer is very obvious. Christ has willed that His gospel shall be preached to ever creature. "Go ye, teach all things I have commanded you," to all nations. "A necessity lieth upon me," says St. Paul, "to preach the gospel, and woe to me if I preach not the gospel." Secondly, you might just as well ask me why, if I found a man keeping body and soul together by working night and day, though even then it was a hundred to one that he would at last break down from sheer fatigue, I should venture to invite him into a land of plenty, where to die of starvation was an act of sheer madness.

Now, such are the relative positions of Protestants and Catholics. The Catholic has certainty of fruit—he has the sacraments—outward helps to grace, spiritual levers, so to speak, by which the weakness of his human efforts is made strong towards eternal life; he lives in an atmosphere of grace, in the midst of the communion of saints, helped by their prayers and good works; and around him in the rivers of the sacraments steam the merits of the blood of Jesus. But from all these things those outside are cut off entirely. They have no solid basis on which to rest belief. Their ever changing creeds prove it; their restlessness, their worldliness, their latitudinarianism, their constant down grade, all demonstrate it. Their spiritual strength is from themselves; it springs either from self-confidence or from desperation. Again, how difficult is it not to prove that those who are not of the church are kept from her by good faith. Who can know it but God Himself. Who alone readeth the secrets of hearts? Hence to leave them alone is not kind, but an act of cruelty towards them, an act of disloyalty towards the Divine Master. There lies, consequently, upon every man who has come to the use of reason, the bounden duty of becoming a Catholic so soon as this great truth is borne in upon him as a conviction that the Catholic Church is Christ's representative on this earth. And to such as are not convinced of her truth and are yet in doubt, there is the equal duty of earnest, diligent, prayerful inquiry. To rest in doubt is sinful and jeopardises eternal salvation. But every day we find men who know as clear as noonday that the Church is the home of truth and grace, and yet fail to enter her. We say of such that they lack faith. "And no man cometh to Christ unless it be given him of the Father."

But there at once arises the terrible question: How far have such resisted God's grace, sinned against the light, and let salvation pass by their doors? The sun sometimes shines full on a room, yet the room itself is dark, not because there is no sunlight, but because that light is shut out. So is it often with men's souls. They are not honest with themselves or God; or they lack humility, and "God turneth away from the proud;" or they are not pure, the clean of heart shall see God; "the sensual man understandeth not the things of God;" or they are too engrossed in worldly things, their minds and hearts set on business; or finally they do not pray. "Prayer disposeth the heart to God." If a man prays earnestly and constantly, "O Lord, give me light to know Thy truth; give me grace to follow it when known," to such a one the grace of faith will surely be given. "Ask and you shall receive that your joy may be full."