

Scandal.

There is no more solemn—we may well say awful—declaration of Our Lord than when He said: "Woe unto the world because of scandals for it must needs be that scandals come, but nevertheless, woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh." The fact that our Lord said that it was necessary that scandals should come is no excuse for our giving scandal. On the contrary, we are solemnly warned that the just judgments of heaven may be expected to fall upon us if we give scandal. Again He says: "He that shall scandalize one of those little ones that believe in Me it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." This shows the estimation in which the subject of scandal was held by our Lord.

And how did the Apostles look upon the matter? Saint Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, speaking of the danger of giving scandal by eating meat which had been offered to idols says: "Take heed lest perhaps this your liberty become a stumbling-block to the weak . . . and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ hath died. Now when you sin thus against the brethren and wound their weak conscience you sin against Christ." For himself this noble Apostle declares: "Wherefore if meat scandalize my brother I will never eat flesh lest I should scandalize my brother." That is the heroic charity which it would be well for us all to try to imitate.

Again the same Apostle in his Epistle to the Romans, says: "Let us not therefore judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that you put not a stumbling block or a scandal in your brother's way." "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of." "Therefore let us follow after the things that are of peace and keep the things that are of edification one towards another." "It is good not to eat meat, and not to drink wine nor anything whereby thy brother is offended or scandalized, or made weak." Then follows a very solemn injunction to which we all do well to take earnest heed. "Hast thou faith. Have it to thyself before God. Blessed is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth." That is, if you have faith be true, be consistent and sincere before God. Mere profession is of no account. Blessed will you be if you do not condemn yourself by acting contrary to your professed principles. By all means be consistent and live up to your profession and your principles for it is a fearful thing to give scandal to your brethren, to weak consciences, or to the world at large.

Can there possibly be a sadder reflection, or one more fraught with self-reproach and even with remorse when brought before the judgment seat of God, or, for that matter, before the judgment of our own consciences in the light of divine truth, than that by our deliberate or even thoughtless conduct, we may have been the cause—even the unwitting cause of damage to the spiritual interests, perhaps the loss, of the soul of another? We remember to have heard the story—we believe it was a true one—of a young man who was wavering in doubt about becoming a Christian, though often solicited by a Christian friend of his. Finally the young man, knowing that his friend would probably be placed in circumstances where his faith and constancy would be severely tried, said to himself, "I will watch him now and see whether he is consistent and has the courage of his convictions. If he comes through unscathed I will have faith and become a Christian. If not I shall have very good evidence that Christianity is something to be professed but not practised—in fact that it is all a sham." Fortunately his friend was

true to his convictions and the young man was converted. But what if he had failed? Of course, it is easy to say that the young man was unreasonable in hanging his faith upon such a slender thread. But that would not excuse the failure of his friend. The silent influence of example is proverbial. Striking instances of it are constantly occurring in the experience of almost every one. This is particularly the case with us Catholics.

We are surrounded by Protestants who are more or less ignorant of the Catholic religion. They are all curious to learn about it. Some, under the influence of favorable circumstances have lost their prejudices in a measure, and are in a respective state of mind, but they are not enough interested to go to work seriously to examine the subject. They are influenced by external circumstances, especially by the character and conduct of some Catholics with whom they are acquainted. It has often been remarked and we believe the remark is perfectly true, that if all Catholics were good, consistent Christians, and lived up to the requirements of their religion the world would be converted in a comparatively short time. What a terrible thought that the conversion of the world should be retarded and souls lost through the inconsistencies of professed Catholics.

In this connection it seems to us that nothing is more deplorable, nothing more un-Catholic and scandalous than the manifestation of party spirit especially among some of our Catholic writers. A sincere love of the truth is thoroughly inconsistent with all mere personal considerations in advocating and defending it. Mere worldly ambition, pride of opinion, personal pique and personal vanity of special gifts, strife for the vanquishing of an opponent rather than for the triumph of truth, and efforts to widen rather than heal the breaches of controversy—all this is totally and entirely foreign to the true Christian and Catholic spirit and scandals resulting from it will reveal their sad and desolating effects only in eternity at the judgment seat of God when all hearts shall be revealed and we shall be called upon to render an account of our stewardship.

"See how these Christians love one another," was the powerful attraction which multiplied converts in the early Church. Would to God the experience could be repeated in our day. It is believed by many that the conversion of our country has been put back many years—who can tell how many—by the unfortunate developments of the past year. Oh, brethren, for God's sake, for our own souls sake, for the sake of dear, Holy Church which we love, and the salvation of souls for which we labor, let us "lay aside all malice and all guile, and dissimulations, and envies and all detractions and as new-born babes desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby we may grow unto salvation if so be we have tasted that the Lord is sweet." Why should we be at enmity with one another. Are we not all brethren? Are we not all laboring for the same glorious end? Are we not all agreed in essential principles? Why should we quarrel about technicalities or matters of discipline which should be left to the ordinary of each diocese? Let us give up all personal pique and sharp-shooting, and severe criticism and let us try to see eye to eye and settle down to calm, dignified, brotherly advocacy of the great truths for the defence of which we are set as watchmen on the walls of Zion.—*Catholic Review*.

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