



"AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM."

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EDITOR BRANN ON SUPERNAL VISIONS.

A Freethinker's Interesting Chapter on "Catholic vs. Protestant 'Cranks.'"

From the July number of Brann's Iconoclast we take the following:

An unknown correspondent clips from the press a rather sensational account of the supposed appearance of the Holy Virgin to Louise Paliniere at Tilly-sur-Seulles, together with the pilgrimages to the spot, and sends it to the Iconoclast with the following comment and query: "About once a year the Catholics run off after some such crank, thereby bringing religion into contempt and creating atheists by their ridiculous mummery. Why don't you turn your iconoclastic batteries loose on this *rol-de-rol*? What is your opinion of people who countenance such idiocies?"

The man who writes a letter reflecting upon the sanity or honesty of a numerous and patriotic body of American people should have the moral courage to either sign his screed or burn it. An anonymous "roast" is a cowardly stab in the dark. Publishers do well to consign to the waste basket such communications as being the emanations of irresponsibles—of people who will say more in a minute than they will stand up by in a month. However, as my correspondent has touched upon a subject of interest to many people, I will, in this instance, waive the rule applying to anonymity. Frankly, I think but little of miracles, ancient or modern, and regard supernatural appearances as but the idiosyncrasies of religious neurotics. Mlle. Paliniere's vision of the Virgin was, in my opinion, but a day-dream, the fond imaginings of a maid with whom religion had become a monomania, her fervor and ecstasy bordering on delirium. Still, I realize that there may be more things in this world than I have dreamed of in my philosophy. In dealing with the supernatural, as with all things else, it is well to bear in mind the apothegm of Seneca, to the effect that "many persons would have attained to wisdom if they had not presumed that they already possessed it."

If the age of the miraculous, of angelic visitations ever began, we have no special reason for believing that it has come to an end. It is certainly no more remarkable that the Lord should reveal Himself to St. Theresa and the Virgin to the maid of Tilly-sur-Seulles than that Jacob should wrestle with an angel and Jehovah speak to Moses from the burning bush. If there was ever a time in the world's history when something more than the written law becomes necessary to fix mankind's faltering faith, that time is even now. The man who scoffs at St. Theresa's visions yet accepts unflinchingly the inerrancy of the Bible, strains at a diatom and swallows an entire drove of dromedaries. There are various reasons why the Iconoclast does not align its guns upon these so-called supernal visions. I am not aware that they are doing the world any serious damage, and the Iconoclast assails only those things which it believes to be really detrimental.

Furthermore, to brand all such visionaries as "cranks" and those who countenance them as "idiots" were to vilipend the coryphe of the Reformation and deride the Protestant faith. If all who dream dreams and see visions; if all who profess to have seen the supernatural be written down as purveyors of ridiculous *rol-de-rol* what is to become of our beloved Luther and his co-laborers? It was not the magic mirror which St. Theresa saw; not the Archangel Gabriel in Rue de Paradis, nor the Virgin Mother standing beneath an elm in the canton of Calvados that Luther witnessed; such visitants were entirely too tame for that good man who denounced the Zwinglians as "damned fools and blasphemers," insulted the learned Erasmus, called the doctors of Louvain "beasts, pigs and pagans," incited the people to assassinate the Pope, and otherwise displayed that vigor and virulence which drew after him all the chronic kickers of Christendom.

Luther's supernatural visitor was invariably the devil, and those two worthies usually made it hot for each other. The prince of darkness appears

to have gotten the best of the controversies, however, for Luther himself assures us that Satan by his arguments compelled him to make an important alteration in divine services; also that on another occasion his infamandane visitor worsted him in a debate and so terrified him by his voice that he was in danger of death. Zwinglius, the father of Protestantism in Switzerland, relates that when about to be turned down in a religious disputation a black phantom appeared and helped him out of the hole. Whether this was the same party that amended Luther's creed we are not informed. Nor has this unhappy faculty of seeing the devil yet been lost by Protestant divines. Entering a Protestant church some years ago at Tipton, Iowa, I was surprised to see the pastor engaged in an exparte dispute with an invisible person. He shook his fist and declared that he "would pray despite all the powers of hell." And pray he did. After advising the Lord regarding a number of things of which He was supposed to have no knowledge, and telling Him exactly how to manage the universe, he informed us that the devil had come up to the pulpit and warned him not to call upon the name of the Lord. The name of this wonderful sight-seer was Crismus. At Ashton, Ill., a good old Protestant lady assured me that upon going into her cellar one day she was confronted by Satan; that she fell upon her knees in prayer and he disappeared. As she was noted for the excellence of her SAUER KRAUT I have always suspected that the prince of darkness was on a foraging expedition.

It were easy to cite hundreds of such visions, related by Protestants, since the days of Luther. There is, however, a marked difference between Protestants and Catholics in this respect. While the former usually see the devil, the latter content themselves with visions of the Lord or Virgin. Why this is so, I know not; but, as a good Protestant, the fact gives me ineffable pain. Some of those terrible Jesuits are liable to suggest that angels and demons, like men and women, usually visit those in sympathy with themselves. Another remarkable fact which may well give us pause is that, while the religious ecstasies of the Catholics are usually conducive to peace on earth and good-will to men, those of their Protestant brethren are almost invariably trouble-breeders. It does no particular harm for a maid to get the idea into her head that she has seen the Virgin Mother; but John of Leyden proclaiming himself King of Zion, marrying seventeen wives and authorizing most brutal murder, is quite another matter. David George asserted that he was the Son of God; Hermann urged the massacre of all magistrates; Hackett declared himself to be Christ; Johanna Southcote issued passports to heaven, while scores of others indulged vagaries equally fantastic or dangerous. It must be remembered that these people were not only Protestants, but commanded considerable following; that many of them demanded and received the worship of latria, which the most enthusiastic Catholics have ever withheld from their Popes and saints. True, Luther did not sanction the fierce fanaticism and egregious folly of the Anabaptists; but he was none the less responsible therefor. It was the natural sequence of his revolt against authority, of the doctrine—which is the basal principle of Protestantism—that each individual possesses an inalienable right to put such interpretation upon the Scriptures as he may please.

Protestantism has, from its inception, been the unwilling wet-nurse of infidelity. Luther did more to propagate it than did the alleged moral laches of the worst of Popes, the sacred relics that have been subjected to so much ridicule, the modern miracles, the doctrine of Papal infallibility and so-called "sale of Indulgences." The Catholic Church is based upon authority, whether real or assumed I shall not here pretend to say. It insists that it is the chosen salvatory and divinely ordained exegete of Christian dogma. We may decline to admit this claim; but we cannot deny that it was the sheet anchor of Europe for a thousand years; the lone rock upon which Vandal and Visigoth beat in vain; the rallying point for a society otherwise helplessly wrecked. In politics, art,

science, letters, there was chaos; but amid it the Roman Catholic Church stood immutable as a granite monument. Suppose that it had faltered; had stopped to argue; had declared that it believed instead of declaring that it knew; had implored instead of commanding. Every student of history knows what would have happened—the Christian religion would have perished utterly and Luther's revolt been against the Innaul of Islam. This authority once overturned throughout a large portion of Europe, the wildest excesses followed. Ignorant and violent men became the founders of sects, whose ridiculous doctrines and unseemly orgies disgusted thinking men with the very name of religion. Atheism and Protestantism developed side by side, the scholar following the gonfalon of the first, the ignoramus trailing blindly in the wake of the last. A few learned men of well balanced minds embraced Protestantism in its infancy; but almost without exception they drifted into the camp of doubt or returned to the Catholic Church.

It is impossible to find during the first century of the Reformation one master mind which it caught and held. Even Melancthon, the beloved disciple of Luther and by all odds the ablest of the early reformers, declared that he felt "like Daniel in the lion's den," and was "tempted to take flight." Nor is this all. While the Catholic Church has ever asserted its position and proclaimed its doctrines as those regarding whose truth there could be no doubt, the great Protestant divines have seldom been willing to accept the inevitable sequence of the dogmas they were employed to preach. Professing one thing they have proclaimed another or dodged the issues altogether. Beecher's lecture on evolution is a case in point, being almost as materialistic as even Ingersoll could ask. But it is not alone in these decadent days that we find doubt among the Protestant divines. Luther himself declared that he did not know whether he taught the truth or not, and freely admitted that he could not prevail upon himself to believe what he taught to others! (The first of the foregoing statements we have on the authority of Luther himself, the latter on the testimony of his eulogist, John Mathei.) How is that for a *SOI-DISANT* reformer and founder of a new faith—for one who separated from the Church of Rome because as he assumes, it had connived at falsehood? It is somewhat remarkable that, while admitting his doubts, first to his intimates, then to the public, Luther should have declared: "It is certain that I received my dogmas from heaven. I will not allow you to judge of my doctrine, neither you nor the angels in heaven." Yet, as before stated, individual liberty of biblical interpretation was the basic principle of Protestantism! Is it any wonder in view of these inconsistencies—not to say absurdities—of the prime mover of the Reformation, that Protestantism should be to-day a mere jumble of contradictions, which repels men of analytical minds and leaves them to choose between Catholicity, deism and infidelity. Doubtless there were atheists in the world before the Reformation, before the inauguration of the Christian era, but there were few in Europe until Luther began to preach toleration while persecuting, to demand abject submission to dogmas which he himself doubted. The Catholic Church had to deal with many schismatics before the Reformation, but it was reserved for Protestantism to wage a war of extermination on avowed atheists—Cronus devouring his own children! The learned Gruet was the first "infidel serpent" to be strangled by the infant Hercules. His offence was greater even than that of Servetus—he not only disagreed with Calvin, that avatar of "toleration," but had the audacity to criticize him! Theodore Beza, contemporary of Luther and Calvin, and apostle of the Reformation in France, makes a declaration which proves that the Protestant leopard has not changed its spots during the past three centuries—that it was the same provocative of infidelity at its birth that it is to-day. "On what point of religion (he plaintively asks) are the churches which have declared war against the Popes agreed? Examine all from beginning to end, and you will hardly find one thing affirmed by the one which the other does not directly cry out against as impious."—Catholic Record.

THE DEPARTURE

Of the Rev. Father Blais, O. M. I.

Rev. Father Blais' departure for the east in the hope of restoring his shattered health was made the occasion of a great demonstration of esteem and affection on the part of his devoted flock. We borrow from the Rat Portage News the beautiful address which is a truthful statement of the good Father's noble work, together with his own not less beautiful and touching reply.

ADDRESS PRESENTED TO REV. FATHER BLAIS, O. M. I., OF NOTRE DAME DU PORTAGE.

REVEREND AND DEAR FATHER,

We have assembled here this evening to express to you in person, the deep sentiments of reverence and affection which we entertain for you as our devoted Parish Priest. During the far too short period of your incumbency, you have endeared yourself to us as well by your piety and devotion to the church of God as by your many acts of disinterested kindness to us all. When you came to our parish there were many changes and improvements of a material as well as of a spiritual character which claimed your zealous care and attention. You at once addressed yourself to these with an earnestness and assiduity which challenges the admiration of us all. But it needs no words of ours to proclaim your almost herculean labors in our behalf. You leave behind you enduring monuments of your love for us and your greater love for God. The erection of our handsome high altar, the introduction of lighting by electricity, the acquisition of our new chandeliers, the reconstruction and improvement of our choir, which did so much to render our last Xmas services the finest ever witnessed here; the establishment of the League of the Sacred Heart with a membership of about one hundred and fifty, the formation of our altar society, which is simply fulfilling its mission of usefulness, and last but not least the organization and training of your "Crown of earthly Angels" as you most fittingly term your small army of altar boys; these and many other useful and necessary undertakings are evidences of the apostolic zeal and enthusiasm which have actuated you. Ah! Father, many a weary and fatiguing hour have you spent in the accomplishment of so much for us in the spaces of a few months.

But over all and above all we do esteem you for the kind and self-sacrificing disposition you have ever evinced towards us. No thought of self was ever allowed to restrain you when the spiritual—aye, or the temporal welfare of your flock demanded your attention. Ungrateful then should we be did we allow you to depart without giving you some tangible proof that your labors have met with appreciation. Please then, dear Father, accept this purse in the spirit in which it is given—the spontaneous tribute of a grateful and affectionate people to a truly good and noble priest. Need we say, how sincerely we deplore the illness which calls you from us for a time. We fear, dear Father, you have overtaxed your strength in your labors for us and our sense of obligation to you is thereby heightened and intensified. Rest assured, wherever your lot be cast, you leave behind you by the beautiful shores of the Lake of the Woods many warm friends, whose good wishes will ever follow you through life and whose earnest prayers will be ever offered to the throne of grace in your behalf.

Wishing you a pleasant holiday, speedy restoration to health and strength and a happy return to your faithful people, we remain

Your loving parishioners,
Signed on behalf of
THE CONGREGATION,

CHAS. MCMURDIE,
ANGUS MCKINNON,
J. E. RICE,
P. H. L'HEUREUX,
H. BLODEAU,
JOS. CHARRONNEAU,
ARTHUR DERRY,
R. J. MCGLOUGHLIN.
Rat Portage, July 31st 1896.

FATHER BLAIS' REPLY.

In replying to the address the Rev. gentleman took occasion to say that he was lost for words to reply to so flattering an address. His friends all knew that he was in a condition of bodily weakness, and that, as is usual, his mind participated, at least to some extent, in his physical disability. He, however, assured his people in all sincerity and truth, that there was one part of his being still unimpaired, viz. his heart, which pulsated with feelings of true love and friendship for each and every member of the flock he was about to leave for a time. He would therefore let his heart speak, because when a man of heart spoke to people of heart, he was sure to be understood whatever the diction. In looking at their beautifully illustrated address, he beheld at the top a picture of ladies in black attire. This, he presumed was a representation of the good nuns of the parish as they gathered around the organ and lifted their sweet voices in praise of the common Father of us all. They had

been most fittingly put in the topmost place because that suggested to our minds that these holy women, by their lives of devotion and self denial, were worthy of their exalted position. Nor was this matter of wonderment, for the good nuns had just emerged from their annual retreat which had been preached to them by the able, eloquent and holy pastor of "The Immaculate Conception," Winnipeg, Rev. Father Cherrier, whom he had the pleasure and honor to see present this evening. The Rev. Father then referred to the League of the Sacred Heart and hoped and prayed that its blessings would be poured forth on all the families and the citizens of the good town of Rat Portage. In referring to the praises bestowed on himself for his labors, he feared they had listened more to the voice of their hearts than to their consciences. Where there is love there is no labor, and if there is labor then the labor is love. He gave some good advice to the altar boys, and most earnestly urged his parishioners to be united. He closed a very earnest reply by asking all his people to pray for him and bade them all a fond good-bye.

AN INDIAN SISTERHOOD.

The Progressive Influence of Leo XIII. Has Wrought Good in Unexpected Quarters.

One of the most gratifying of American tributes to Leo XIII. must be contained in the following letter from Elbow Wood, North Dakota, which has appeared in the columns of the Roman Post:

"The reverend prioress-general and all her sisters are of the tribes of Dakotas, Chippewas, Arickarees, Gros Ventres and Mandans. Their existence and history will, no doubt, interest your readers, as theirs is the first religious congregation of American Indians in the history of the Church and its missions. Moreover, the success of their congregation has finally settled the question, so long in dispute, as to whether it were possible for Indians of the first generation to step from barbarism to the highest civilization.

"For four centuries the Indians have been very anxious to have priests and Sisters of their own race. In their own tribal organization they had orders of 'Sacred Virgins.' Their religious and philosophical systems had given them a moral and mental development which enabled them to understand and follow at once, with proper training, the Christian precepts and counsels. Missionaries did not understand this, nor did they believe that the wish of the Indians could be readily, if indeed ever, realized.

"When the Indians were informed of the progressive policy of Leo XIII. an Indian girl, Sacred-White-Buffalo, the chief Sacred Virgin of the Dakota Confederation, born in the Dakota war camp, but educated in a convent school, felt there was at last some hope for her race and wished to found a congregation of Sisters to carry out the policy of the Holy Father. She applied to Rev. Francis M. J. Craft, of Fort Berthold, North Dakota, for assistance. With his aid she was enabled to send her candidates to convent school. After passing through a novitiate she made her religious profession. In religion she took the name of Sister Catherine.

In a war which broke out between the Indians and the troops Father Craft was wounded, and, it was believed mortally, at the battle of Wounded Knee Creek. An attempt was then made to send the candidates back to the Indian camp, but fortunately Father Craft was enabled to leave the hospital and reach the convent in time to prevent it. Sister Catherine then came with her candidates to Fort Berthold Indian Agency, founded her congregation and became the first prioress-general. In May 1883, she died before the altar in the chapel of the convent and after receiving the Papal benediction through his Eminence Cardinal Satolli.

"The Congregation of American Sisters is now regarded as the most progressive religious congregation in America. The success of the Sisters is due in part to their heroic perseverance under the severest hardships and tribulations, but chiefly to the enlightened policy of the Holy Father, which has reached even to the wild tribes of Western America and has enabled the Indians to do at once what the Christian missionaries had been unable to do or considered impossible during four centuries."

There is something almost miraculous in this wonderful fact, which reveals to the world that the progressive influence of Leo XIII. has wrought good in such unexpected quarters.—Catholic Record.