

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.
COCXIN.

When the editors of the Presbyterian Witness remark that, so far as they know, the Pope has never yet expressed himself in favor of the religious freedom of Christians as such (although he energetically affirms the religious freedom of the Jews), the connection shows that they mean this as a reproach. But is it a reproach?

As we have seen, if this is a reproach, it is one which almost certainly falls upon the Witness itself. We can not believe that the editors allow that an evil religion is entitled to freedom merely by covering itself with the name of Christian. Were not the Anabaptists of Munster rightly punished for their murderousness and their bloodiness? Was not the Family of Love rightly suppressed under Elizabeth and James? Mormonism teaches that the large indulgence of sexual desire, if it issues in offspring, raises a man to the rank of God, and that there is no other God than such as have acquired Divinity thus.

This hideous tenet can never be overcome by argument. It issued from the corrupt heart of an evil man; it is maintained by corrupt and evil impostors; it is spreading with political rapidity among the lower orders of our own country and others. What sane man will claim for any one a right to teach it? The question whether the propagation of such a tenet should not be forbidden, and the prohibition enforced by the sword, is surely only a question of expediency and practicality. Such penal legislation can never be forbidden in the name of Christian freedom.

I notice that a Mormon has just written a book in which he declares that his utmost charity can hardly persuade him to own us for brethren. The vile and impudent wretch! We his brethren! He might as well call us the brethren of his father the devil. There is war between us to the death, and if the Christians of our land are so nervous, have so little moral energy, that they will not put down polygamous Mormonism, by whatever means are found necessary, they will deserve all that shall befall them when the cancer shall have spread from Canada to the Gulf.

The doctrines of the Oneida Perfectionists are far fouler than even Mormonism itself, for they allow the indulgence of appetite under conditions that shall guard against the multiplication of life, and distinctly identify love with lust. Yet when this community, daunted by the indignation of its neighbors, announced that it had abandoned the promiscuousness to which it had given the name of "complex marriage," there were religious papers which made haste to assure it of the sympathy of Christians in carrying out the other parts of its social experiment. The fact that it retained the expression, "to go for nothing!" The community remained, in principle, rotten to the core, but, because it had been for the time being frightened out of the exercise of its belief, it was to be gathered within the circle of Christian sympathy and helpfulness!

What peculiarly emphasized this precipitate embrace offered by these Perfectionists was, that, not far from the same time, the same paper had been using most scornful language towards a religious community, whose doctrine and practice of Christian morals are confessedly, and eminently, above reproach. Yet it maintains that Christ may revive early gifts and functions of the Church, and as this might throw the influence of certain religious editors into the shade, it is reported in terms which stop little short of accusing its leaders of downright dishonesty, although they are known to be men of eminent personal worth.

To be sure, they believe that the coming of the Lord is at hand, and the paper in question is scandalized that we should be thought to need Christ particularly in these happy days. Let him wait, it signifies, until we send for him. Indeed, there are certain religious editors who seem to be as uneasy over the prospect of the Lord's second coming as Herod's sanhedrin was over the news of His first.

In fact, this paper seems to think that we hardly need even the Saviour's teachings. It says, for instance, that it was all very well for Him to oppose divorce in His day, but that His day is not our day, and that we have a right to go our own gait, without vermuch concern about His opinions and injunctions.

However, I understand that this paper has pretty much ceased to call itself a religious paper, and we are not now concerned with the teachings of irregular papers.

Even Luther taught that concubinage, while not to be commended, only a venial sin, worse than permitted polygamy, but something that need not interfere with a man's justification. Now was it wrong for the civil authority to put down such an opinion? And as Luther maintains that his doctrine of justification had ruined public morality, would it have been wrong for the Emperor Charles to put down Lutheranism if he could?

This has nothing to do with Charles' severity in the Netherlands, for these were mainly directed against Calvinism, which is a system of a widely different tenor, as Mohler points out. It seems farther from Catholicity than Lutheranism, but ethically it is a good deal nearer. It is sad folly for Calvinists to allow their system to be identified with Luther's Lutheranism. Modern Lutheranism seems to be quite a different affair.

However, both the systems began by denouncing Catholicity as evil, and false, and idolatrous, and unscriptural and pernicious, and worthy of being persecuted to the death. Now, as Hallam remarks, European society had been for ages identified with Catholicism, religiously, morally, and civilly.

Then, not to say that the spirit of those ages ill-endured religious dissent in any form, how could Catholic Europe be forbidden to strain every nerve to defend itself against this disintegrating and forcible assault? No more than Christendom can now be forbidden to strain every nerve to guard itself against dissolution under the assault of Anarchism. Already this danger has led our own nation, for the first time, to restrict the propagation even of abstract opinion. This is a sad necessity, but we can hardly dispute that it may be imperative, if rightly restrained and balanced.

Therefore we cannot say that opinions, either religious or political, are always to be allowed. They may be so harmless as to deserve no attention, or so strong as to make attempts at suppression futile. Again, they may be so dangerous as to make it worth while to throw everything into the breach in the bare hope of checking them. Catholicism did not succeed in reclaiming all Europe to itself, but it did succeed in saving much, and in reclaiming much. How can we censure it, especially when we remember that it was contending against a power which called for its extirpation by the sword? Luther gave the watchword at the beginning. "Bathe your hands in the blood of the Pope and Cardinals."

Lord Macaulay was a decided Protestant, but he is fair-minded enough to give simply a vivid picture of the mighty struggle, without dealing out praise or blame on either side. He treats it as what it was, an inevitable conflict between two irreconcilable forces.

Now how could the Pope proclaim the right to exist of a religion which denied his right to exist, which would know him only as anti-Christ, and which called for his blood? Even now how can we expect any such formal declaration from him? Protestantism has mitigated its animosity towards him, but it has not abandoned it, and only exceptionally treats him as a legitimate power. Where Protestants do, they meet from him a thoroughly benevolent reception. Nay, without asking how they felt towards him, he allowed English and American Protestants to worship at his capital city of Rome, long before he lost his temporal authority. When a Presbyterian society asked Gregory XVI. to leave to build a church in the city itself, his Holiness smilingly answered: "You should have built it without asking me. No one would have interfered. Now that you have asked, I am obliged to request you to build your chapel outside the walls." This information was given to me during Gregory's reign, by a gentleman who had just come from Rome.

It seems to me therefore that the Pope has come just as near affirming the religious freedom of Christians as such as he can be reasonably asked of him, seeing that he must of necessity view Protestantism as a lamentable defection from truth and from rightful authority in the Church.

CHARLES C. STARBUCK.
Andover, Mass.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

In closing our review of the Sacrament of Baptism there are several matters to which we desire to direct attention. These relate to the kinds of baptism, who are authorized to administer it, the ways of administering it, the names by which the baptisms and the obligations of godparents.

Those who have not forgotten their catechism will recall three kinds of baptism; namely, baptism by water, by blood and by fire. Only the first, however, is a sacrament. The other two simply supply the place of the sacrament when it cannot be administered. Martyrdom is baptism by blood, while the fervent desire to receive the sacrament is called the baptism by fire.

As to the authorized ministers of the sacrament these are Bishops and priests, although in cases of necessity lay persons can also baptize. Here becomes apparent the obligation resting upon all lay persons of knowing how to baptize. This we have heretofore pointed out.

Next as to the valid ways of administering the Sacrament of Baptism. These are three: namely, by pouring, by sprinkling and by immersion. According to the rites of the Church in this part of the world, however, the former manner only is observed.

The next matter deserving consideration is the name to be given to the one baptized. In this day of foolish fashion admonitions in this particular are quite opportune. Among a certain class of parents there is a growing desire to name their children after distinguished persons or to give to them names found in the popular novels of the day. Such action is frivolous and not in keeping with the spirit of the sacrament.

Baptism, as we have seen, makes us children of God and thus distinguishes us from those who are not Christians. Many of the names chosen after the above fashion, however, are anything but indications of a Christian. On the contrary, some are of heathen origin. The names of God's most glorious servants found in the list of saints and on the sanctified scroll of the Church should be sufficient. Who selects them from will make no mistake.

Finally as to the selection of godparents. This office is one of very grave responsibility. Upon those who assume it is imposed the solemn duty of instructing the child in the Catholic religion should parents neglect, or death prevent them from doing so. Such being the case two conclusions follow. First, that godparents should always be Catholics; secondly they should be such Catholics as are able to comply with the requirements of the obligations they assume. On this point we do not wish to say more than that the opportunity of these catechetical reviews will no doubt manifest itself to a great many readers. Those who find themselves wanting should hasten and eagerly supply the deficiency.—Church Progress.

Self conquest is the greatest victory.

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost.

PRESUMPTION OF GOD'S MERCY.

Unless you have believed in vain.—(1 Cor. xv. 2)

Dear Brethren: The Apostle appears to be of a different mind from some of us, who seem to think that there is no such thing as believing in vain. Do not sinners have believed in their wickedness just because they believe in the true religion? Do they not feel sure of salvation because they know how to be saved? Is not the blessed privilege of the holy faith the secret reason of many a person's delay of repentance? It is against all such that St. Paul stands when he speaks of a vain faith; and our Blessed Lord himself when he says that pagan Tyre and Sidon shall rise up in witness against those who had the true religion and used it only to put themselves up with spiritual pride.

To be guilty of an unused faith is the high road to eternal loss among Catholics. Some poor souls will be lost because, though born in error, they have refused to follow the light of reason into the Church. But we shall be lost, if at all, because we have believed in vain. Some outside of the Church shall be lost because they have sinned even against the simplest precepts of nature's law. But we shall be condemned for believing all that Our Lord revealed and making it vain by our wicked deeds. A vain faith is like the background of a picture: the eye catches and dwells on the objects in the foreground, but these could not be seen clearly but for the tints in the background against which they are drawn. So what we do will one day be contrasted with what we know; the strong light of faith will only cause the black, filthy sins of our life to be more fully revealed to the Judge.

Have you never seen a blind man whose eyes seemed perfectly good, clear, and bright, and yet utterly blind? There is such a kind of blindness; some men really have eyes, and yet, because the nerve is dead, and the nerve is like the soul of the eye. So with our faith: God gave it to us to see by and walk by and live by; to know His law and live up to it; to know our sins and to confess them with true sorrow—in a word, to practise what we know that we ought to practise. But some become like the idols of the nations you read of in one of the Vespers psalms: "They have eyes, and see, but they have ears, and hear not." Wicked Catholics perceive the right way; they hear of the dangers of the wrong way, and go right along with this knowledge, and neglect prayer and Mass, blaspheme and fight, get drunk and debauch, and steal, yet having all the time full assurance that somehow or other their faith will save them. Brethren, their faith is vain: their hope of eternal life is not reasonable or well founded; the beauty of the truth they possess is like the cold beauty of a corpse, which makes one shudder only the more from its incongruity with the putrid decay so surely approaching.

Yet how rich a treasure is the true faith! What a comfort to know the truths of religion! What a privilege to know our Lord and to have communion with Him! Blessed Mother, His glorious saints, His holy Church! What a pervasiveness, then, to use all this as a burglar uses his rope-ladder; a means of making a criminal life more secure. But it cannot be. It is a delusion. There is no means of making a criminal life secure, except by turning quickly away from it, detesting it, confessing it, and by the light of faith and strength of charity, leading a good life.

WHEN A CATHOLIC VOTES.

That was a notable address which the Honorable Charles J. Bonaparte delivered at the commencement exercises of Notre Dame university some time ago. The high place which he occupies in the regard of churchmen and laymen entitled his remarks to serious consideration. Here is a passage taken from his address: "True, the church has no politics; she knows nothing of candidates or platforms, of administrations or policies, of tariffs or currencies. She is mute on every question as to which honest men honestly differ, and no more tells her children what they shall eat or what clothes they shall wear. But she demands that they eat with decency, so she requires them to vote with an unclouded judgment, with the fear of God before their eyes."

Just so far does the Church go in "dictating" to her children "how to vote." In so much the Church is something to fear for the use they make of their franchise. Their elector's oath obliges them to cast their ballot according to the light of conscience. As representatives are responsible for the laws they make, so are electors responsible for the men they choose to make and execute the laws. Men of experience, men acquainted with Christian principles—all possessed with the sense of duty—all commend themselves to a voter who is a Catholic. Needless to say Catholics realize their obligations to a word those who act justly in dealing with all questions touching the Church. More than this the Church does not ask. She can hardly be satisfied with less.

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Everything about Jesus, the merest wandering Chaim, the faintest vestige of His benediction, the very shadow of His likeness, is of such surpassing importance that for the least of these things the whole world would be but a paltry price to pay. The gift of being in the true Church is the greatest of all God's gifts which can be given out of heaven. We cannot exaggerate its value. It is the pearl beyond price. Hence also the woefulness of being out of the Church is not to be told in words. I doubt if it is even to be compassed in thought. What, then, if we had so far lost Jesus as to be out of His Church? Unbearable thought! yet not without some sweetness, as it makes us feel more keenly how indispensable He is to us, and what a meretricious good fortune He has given us to enjoy.

But even inside the Church there are wandering Chaims, impatient sinners who have gone out from the presence of God and willfully abide there. They have lived years in sin, and the chains of sinful habits are heavy upon them. They have resisted grace a thousand times, and it looks as if the divine inspirations were weary of whispering to hearts so deaf. Nothing seems to rouse them. They never advert to God at all. Their conversion must be a perfect miracle. They are obdurate. They are living portions of hell moving up and down the earth. It is only by God's mercy, and through the merits of Jesus, that we are any better than these obdurate sinners. Yet we rightly thank God, even while we tremble at the possibility, that He has prevented our falling into such a state. What then if we were like these? What if we were numbered among the hardened and impenitent? What if we were now even what we ourselves may have been in past years, before the strong arm of the sacraments was held out to us, and we had the grace to lay hold of it and let it draw us safely to the shore? Yet if we were any of these, heathens or heretics, or obdurate sinners, we should still be far better off than if there were no Jesus in the world; for all these classes of men are blessed by Jesus, are visited by His grace continually, and are for His sake surrounded by hopeful possibilities of which themselves are not aware. How unspeakably dreadful must be a man without Jesus, when to be a heathen or a heretic is a misery so terrible!

AMONG THE INDIANS OF MANITOBA.

Father Cahill, Oblate of Mary Immaculate, writes from Portage-du-Rat to Archbishop Langevin of St. Boniface:

"You will be happy to learn that I have had the consolation of baptizing a group of little savages in the chapel of our school of St. Anthony of Padua. Their family, which belongs to the house of 'Dalles,' was received by the Protestant minister, two years ago, but they never professed any religion for the simple reason that they knew nothing. As the Protestant teacher of the Dalles was recalled, the school has been closed, and we have thus been able to receive several pagan children of this mission."

"We are preparing three little pagan girls to be baptized at Easter. Then all our children will be baptized. Little by little the school of St. Anthony of Padua is doing its work of evangelization."

"If Catholics knew the good that is being done in our schools for savages they would manifest more zeal in helping the missionaries in charge. Whilst Protestants receive an immense amount of clothing, we get very little."

"I shall not be able to get along without a young assistant priest; he will be obliged to learn the Santeux to succeed me in visiting the distant missions on the Lake of the Woods, the most beautiful lake in the world."

IN MODERN DAYS.

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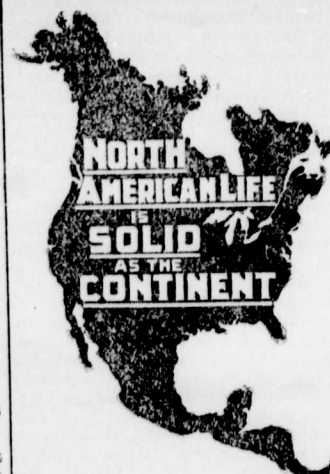
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