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REMARKABLE CONVERSIONS IN THE EAST.

Notwithstanding the persecutions to which the Church is subjected throughout the Asiatic portion of that region is very encouraging as regards the spread of the Catholic Church. The Sultan himself is disposed to be tolerant, but the Pashas of districts remote from the centre of Government are as disposed to tyranny as ever, though their despotic acts are usually with a view to self-aggrandizement.

The Pashas are very intolerant of any inroads made by Christians upon Islamism; but when it is a question of conversion from one form of Christianity to another they make little opposition, generally, unless the conversions take place on a large scale. Under such circumstances their relations to the different denominations become considerably modified, and they are apt to make it an occasion for enriching themselves by imposing a tax or fine. It is with no small astonishment, therefore, that the news has been received that a body of 200,000 Chaldean Nestorians, with their priests, have been received into the Catholic Church.

It has been the aim of Pope Leo XIII. to place before the schismatics of the East the claims of the Roman See to be recognized as the divinely appointed centre of Catholic unity; and there have been numerous returns to the faith from the Oriental or Greek schisms in the Austrian Empire, Bulgaria, Persia and Turkey, both during the time of the present and the late Supreme Pontiffs, but the latest conversions of Nestorians have been on a larger scale than any which have preceded them for four centuries; and they give reason to hope that the period for the termination of those ancient schisms is not very distant. There is, indeed, very good reason to believe that they would in bulk receive the Catholic doctrine, and return to the one fold under one shepherd at almost any moment, were it not for the ambition of the monarchs and patriarchs, who, as matters stand, rule the existing national Churches absolutely as they will; for though it is usual to speak of these Churches as "the Greek or Oriental Church," they are as independent of each other as are the National Established Churches of England, Scotland and Prussia.

No one can be so blind as not to see that the Church of Serbia would have refused to grant a divorce to ex-King Milan, if it had not been completely at the service of the petty monarch who could at will command it to set aside the law of God in his favor; and it is equally evident that if the Church of Russia were to recognize the supremacy of the Pope, his authority would be at once applied to remedy the demoralization of the clergy, which is so notorious in that Empire. The obstacle to union does not come from the people, who would gladly see an improvement in all this, but from the ambition of the patriarchs and Bishops, who, not having been educated to obedience to one supreme head of the universal Church, do not appreciate its necessity, and they are influenced by that ambition which is so natural to frail humanity to rule the Church themselves without being under the responsibility of rendering an account of their stewardship to an outside superior. On the other hand the vanity of the Czar is flattered by his being recognized as the uncontrolled head of Church as well as State.

History repeats itself in all this. It has always been the desire of earthly princes to dictate to the Church what morality should be taught, and what disciplines enforced, rather than that Bishop or priest should restrict them to the belief of certain doctrines or to the stringent practice of certain duties. Kings Edwy, Rufus, John, Henry II., Henry VIII., and Queen Elizabeth are examples of this in English history.

Lothaire and Napoleon Bonaparte on the continent of Europe. It is not a matter of surprise that the same human passions should prevail in Russia, Servia and Greece, and should be an obstacle to the reunion of divided Christendom. In those countries where the Greek schism is the established religion there is more hope for union from missionary labor on humble individuals and localities than upon Czars and patriarchs; and in infidel lands, like Persia and Turkey, where the monarchs have nothing to do with the rule of the schismatical Churches, there can be much more done for the restoration of unity than in those which recognize the monarch as the supreme head of Church and State.

The Chaldean Nestorians who have returned to Catholic unity dwell in the territory bordering on both sides of the Euphrates, including Mesopotamia. They claim that the gospel was originally preached to them by the Apostle St. Thomas, but this is not certain. Christianity was, however, established among them at a very early date, and they were ecclesiastically subject to the Bishops of Edessa and Nisibis. But in the fifth or sixth century they were seduced, together with several Christian communities of the adjacent countries, to the errors of Nestorius, who denied the unity of person in Jesus Christ. As a consequence of this belief they maintained that only the human person was born of Mary, and suffered on the cross. The doctrine subverts the efficacy of our Redemption through the blood of Christ, which would thereby be deprived of its infinite value as an atonement for sin. As a consequence of the same doctrine the Nestorians denied that the name "Mother of God" should be applied to the Blessed Virgin. They said: "The Word (the Son of God) was not born of Mary, but dwelt in and was inseparably united with the Son of Mary."

These doctrines were condemned by the Council of Ephesus, which met A. D. 431, where it was shown that St. Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, called Mary "the Mother of my Lord," and that the Angel Gabriel, in announcing to her the birth of Christ which was soon to take place, said: "The Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (St. Luke i. 35, 43.) These and other texts prove, contrarily to the Nestorian doctrine, that the same person, Christ, Who is the Son of Mary, is also the Lord, the Son of God, made man.

Many modern Protestants have adopted this last mentioned error of the Nestorians; though with that inconsistency which is characteristic of Protestantism they refuse to accept the doctrine on which the Nestorians founded their inference. If Christ is God incarnate, and as such suffered on the cross for the sins of mankind the same God incarnate was born of Mary, and she is rightly styled Mother of God. This was the decision of the Council of Ephesus, and the decision is accepted by all the other schismatics of the east as the doctrine of the early Greek, equally with the Latin Fathers of the Church. St. Cyril of Alexandria was one of the most resolute opponents of the doctrine of Nestorius, and he quoted the Eastern Fathers Origen, St. Dionysius of Alexandria, Basil, Athanasius, Eusebius and others in support of his contention that Nestorius was a heretic. We shall here cite only the testimony of St. Ignatius, who was the disciple of St. John the Apostle. St. Ignatius says in his epistle to the Ephesians, that "Jesus Christ is God dwelling in man, the Son of Mary, and of God."

We hope and believe that the return of these Chaldean Nestorians to the bosom of the Catholic Church is a prelude to the restoration of many other Eastern schismatics and heretics to Catholic unity. This would be a glorious event of the reign of Leo XIII. over the Church of Christ, and it was even supposed when he came to the Pontifical throne, that the title "Lux de Caelo," which is applied by an ancient prophecy to Leo XIII., has in view the triumph which would result to the Church in the conversion of the Greeks. This event would be truly a light from heaven to the nations so converted to the faith.

The year-book of Catholic Missions publishes the following figures with regard to the Catholic missions in Africa, America and Australasia which are under the authority of the Propaganda: In Northern and Central Africa there are 191,805 Catholics; South Africa, 40,555; the islands off the coast of Africa, 166,580; British North America, 2,080,070; United States, 8,026,725; West Indies, 336,500; Patagonia, 28,000; Australia, 608,830; Australian Archipelago, 170,000. The figures for the United States are thought to be defective, as it is almost certain that there are at least 10,000,000 Catholics in the United States.

DIVORCE LAWS.

We notice from the proceedings of the Canadian Parliament that three applications for divorce have been conceded by the Senate. It is true that in Canada there is not the same facility for obtaining divorces which is offered in the United States and that it is only in very extreme cases that a divorce can be obtained in the Dominion. Hence it is only in such extreme cases that divorce is even asked for by residents of Canada. Yet there is great danger that when any cause is regarded as sufficient the door will sooner or later be opened to the granting of divorce for such trivial causes as are regarded as sufficient in the United States.

Regarding this question in that country, Dr. Howard Crosby said recently: "Divorces have already in our country sadly weakened the marriage bond, and introduced a legalized licentiousness. We may, before we know it, reach the deep, deep depravity of Rome under the Emperors, when one man could legally marry twenty women in a single year. No one cause was more prominent than this in corrupting the Roman Empire and procuring its disastrous fall. The sacredness of the marriage tie is the hope of a nation's stability. Without family security there is no State security. Legalized licentiousness rapidly becomes barbarism."

That the family is the foundation of society is conceded by all, and, further, that the ties which bind together the Christian family constitute the basis of Christian civilization. It is, therefore, something extraordinary that such as is the United States, should a nation of Christian antecedents, offer the deplorable spectacle which it presents, of a total disregard of the sanctity of the marriage tie. Official statistics show that in the United States during the ten years ending with 1886, 390,000 divorces were granted, and in 1889 it is computed that there were over 40,000 divorce decrees issued, being more than were granted in all Christian Europe and America besides.

The number of divorces granted annually is constantly increasing, at a much greater rate than the increase of population, and this alarming state of affairs has during the past few years directed the attention of thoughtful men towards an evil of such magnitude, that some remedy may be discovered and applied. The separation of husband and wife under any circumstances gives rise to habitual lasciviousness, and the facility of such separation afforded by divorce laws is a continual temptation held out to the married couple to violate their marriage obligations, in order that under some pretext or other the marriage once contracted may be annulled.

Besides all this, families are altogether broken up by such separation. The death of father or mother before the children be grown up is a severe blow to the whole family, and is felt especially by the children, who must in such case be reared under the care of one parent only. But this is an inevitable state of affairs arising out of the morality of the human race, and it must be borne and provided for by greater attention to be paid by the surviving parent to the proper education of the children. But though we must bow to the will of the Almighty in this case of death, it cannot be reconciled with parental obligations to fulfill their duty to their children to break up the family by their own voluntary act. In the case of a divorce an evil of greater magnitude befalls the family than is entailed even by the death of one of the parents. Against the divine and natural law, which enjoins respect, reverence and obedience to parents, the child which is brought up by a divorced father or mother can only learn to disobey and disrespect the living parent who is cut off from all intercourse with and control over it. We say, therefore, that divorce, through civilly legalized, is a much greater evil than is contemplated by divine or natural law. Add to this the fact that where divorces can be obtained with such facility as is afforded in many of the States, marriage cannot be regarded as a permanent condition of life. It follows from this that the contracting parties will enter upon it simply as a temporary agreement to be dissolved whenever either of them will be able to make up a sufficiently strong cause of complaint; and whereas almost any incompatibility of temper is sufficient to secure dissolution of the marriage tie there is very little difficulty experienced in finding sufficient cause for divorce when one of the married couple desires it.

Besides the reasons we have given above why marriage should be indissoluble, the discussions which arise between families, and the difficulties of deciding to which parent the children should be given in charge are powerful reasons why divorces should not be given under any circumstances.

Ordinary contracts may be dissolved by consent of both parties who have bound themselves to their observance; but the marriage contract differs from all others in this respect that it lies at the root of civil and Christian society, and when it loses its inviolable character evils result which threaten to overturn society itself. Nations and individuals may abrogate their treaties and partnerships with each other, but reason itself teaches us that the marriage contract is of such a character that it should not be dissolved, because more than individual interests are at stake. It is true that under the old law it was permitted under certain circumstances for the husband to grant a bill of divorce. But Christ tells us that this was done on account of the hardness of the hearts of the Jewish people who were under the law. He restored marriage to its primitive indissoluble character, declaring that it was God's intention from the beginning that a man should cling to his wife, and that for this reason He created one man and one woman to be the progenitors of all mankind. This original intention of Almighty God He declared to be the law under which marriage should in future be contracted and He pronounced that what God hath joined together no man may put asunder.

We are sorry to find that our Legislature makes the least inroad upon the marriage law as divinely instituted. Yet we have an evil of less magnitude than that of the United States, just because our laws make divorce more difficult of attainment. Proposals are made from time to time to establish a divorce court similar to those of the United States to facilitate the granting of divorces; but we hope it may be long before such retrogressive legislation be adopted. Retrogressive legislation be adopted. Retrogressive legislation be adopted. Retrogressive legislation be adopted.

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It is bad enough that the divine institution of indissoluble marriage is sometimes violated and the violation legalized, without subverting entirely the married state. Among all the denominations which are regarded as being of any prominence in the country, the formula is used which expresses that the marriage is to last "until death do us part." We trust the time is very distant indeed when marriage shall be contracted only to last until "incompatibility of temper do us part." It is, however, only in the Catholic Church that the sanctity of marriage is fully recognized, and though the present temper of the Canadian people is that we do not want lax divorce laws, we confess that we have some fear that we shall have such laws in Canada before long, or, at least, as soon as the subverting principles of Protestantism shall assert themselves to their logical consequences.

HEREDITARY INTOLERANCE.

The hatred of the Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists and other New England sects which are fond of calling themselves Evangelicals, towards Catholics, is manifested in the remorseless obstinacy with which they endeavor throughout New England to deprive the Catholic children of the boon of a religious education. This is seen especially in Massachusetts, throughout which State there has been a cunningly devised effort made to legislate against Catholic education by having private schools placed under the supervision of the local School Boards, which under the most flimsy pretences would close them all if there were any sign that instruction in Catholic doctrine had any place on the school programme.

Some of the School Boards, indeed, actually went to the length of taking this despotic course, but, as at Haverhill, it was shown that they had exceeded their powers under the law. The object of all this was to force Catholics to send their children to the Public schools, under the pretext that they are non-sectarian; but the extent to which they keep their non-sectarian character was seen in the encouragement given to a Boston teacher to insult the Catholic children in his class by teaching the worn calumnies against Catholics which are the stock-in-trade of such mountebanks as Justin D. Fulton and Mrs. E. Shepard.

While the New England fanatics were taking this course, their pro-

fessions that they alone are the friends of civil and religious liberty were extraordinarily loud. But it is a matter of notoriety that Catholics ask nothing but that they be allowed to exercise their liberty of conscience in the education of their children; and though they are not so boastful as their Puritanical persecutors it is a matter of history that they surpass the latter in willingness to grant to all the fullest liberty of conscience.

It is well known that over two centuries ago the Catholic colonists of Maryland were the first who proclaimed liberty of conscience to all who took up their abode among them, whatever their religious convictions might be. But the Puritans of New England legislated in a very different spirit. They fled from the persecution which was directed against them in England, after the restoration of the monarchy, and looked for a place on the new continent where they would be free to worship according to their own convictions; but they were not willing to accord to others the liberty they wished for themselves. The blue laws, which punished with the severest penalties all who differed from the early Puritanical settlers, are a monument of their intolerance; and that they were superstitious as well as intolerant is testified by the zeal with which they hunted and burned so-called witches. This witch-hunting was the peculiarity of this most straight-laced of Protestant sects.

Archbishop Janssens, of New Orleans, recently delivered a lecture in the Cathedral of Philadelphia in which he pointed out another feature of the kind of civilization which the Puritan Pilgrims established within their jurisdiction. Speaking of the bitterness with which the descendants of the Puritans attacked the Southerners on account of the existence of slavery, he said: "The Southern States may be blamed with slavery and war, but I say that the Pilgrim Fathers were far more cruel towards the negro race than any other. The very ships that brought them to Plymouth Rock were afterwards used to transport the negroes from Africa to be sold as slaves. While we are glad that slavery and war are over, yet we should not throw all the blame on the South."

A COUNCIL WITHOUT AUTHORITY.

The Congregationalists of the world are at present holding an International Council in London, England. The delegates who are assisting at this council number about 300, of whom 100 are from the United States, 100 from the British Isles and 100 from other parts of the world. As the representation is, as far as practicable, proportioned to population, it may be fairly estimated that considerably more than two-thirds of the delegates are from the English-speaking countries, and that Congregationalism has scarcely any adherents outside of the English-speaking population of the world; a fact which powerfully illustrates the non-universal character of the Congregationalist Church; but the same thing is true of every phase of Protestantism.

Congregationalism has certain peculiarities which distinguish it from all other kinds of Protestantism: each church, or rather each congregation, is independent in itself, and in theory can settle its own creed, though this feature of independence has been partly destroyed by the action of the Congregational churches of the United States, which in several councils agreed upon a creed which they require all their ministers to teach, under penalty of being excluded from the general organization.

It is understood, however, that the International Council now in session shall not have any authority over the individual bodies, or Churches, of the different countries which take part in it. A general council of the Church, having no authority over the different branches is certainly a novel idea in Christianity. The first council, held by the Apostles at Jerusalem, an account of which is given in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, was an assemblage of very different character. It had authority to make laws, and to bind the consciences of Christians, and to speak in the name of the Holy Ghost:

"For it hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things."

In this respect the Congregationalist council resembles the other general councils which have been held by the

various Protestant denominations under different names. The Methodists have had their "Ecumenical Council," the Presbyterians and Anglicans their Pan-Presbyterian, and Pan-Anglican synods, but in every case it was recognized as a first principle that these assemblages should have no authority to bind the individual Churches which were represented. This single fact is sufficient to show that these denominations are essentially distinct from the Church which Christ established, and which exercised real authority over all its members. The councils of the Catholic Church, from that of Nice, which met in A. D. 325, down to the Council of the Vatican in 1869, were in this respect very different from those which have been held by Protestant bodies in recent years. The decrees of the Catholic councils have always been reckoned as binding the consciences of all Catholics; and, indeed, we cannot comprehend that a council of the Church is of any value whatsoever if its decisions are of no authority. We cannot suppose, therefore, that the Congregationalist council will result in anything more than mere talk.

THE ASSUMPTION.

The feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, which the Church keeps on the 15th of August, was established in honor of the triumphant entry of the Holy Mother of God into heaven, body and soul, after her death and burial.

The Latin word *Assumptio*, which is translated into English by Assumption, signifies the act of taking to, and it has frequently been applied by ecclesiastical writers to the death of a saint, because at death the soul of the saint is taken to heaven. But, as applied to this festival of the Blessed Virgin, it means that after death she was taken bodily as well as in her soul to the kingdom of God's glory, to enjoy the reward of her pre-eminent virtues and as an additional prerogative to her upon whom God thought it fitting to bestow greater favors than upon any other creature, as the dignity to which she was called was greater than was conferred upon any other. When the Angel Gabriel announced to her, (St. Luke 1.) that she should be the Mother of God incarnate he announced that she was "blessed among women," and St. Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, repeats this same salutation, which is incorporated by the Church into the beautiful prayer which Catholics repeat frequently each day, the Hail Mary or Angelical Salutation. This expression, "Blessed among women," signifies, in the Hebrew idiom, most blessed of women, and it indicates that the graces conferred upon Mary exceed those granted to any other daughter of Eve. Her life was one of special intercommunion with God, and we must expect that at her death God manifested, in a special manner, His approval of her virtues and the sublimity of her prerogatives.

St. Epiphanius was so impressed with the fitness that God should grant the Blessed Virgin a special favor in the mode of the termination of her earthly career that, while acknowledging that there is no positive proof that she was exempt from death, he was inclined to believe that this was actually the case. He said:

"If we examine what the Scripture says on this subject, we shall find no mention whether Mary died or not, or whether or not she was buried. I do not decide this question, and neither do I affirm that she remained immortal, nor do I assert that she was mortal."

Other Christian writers of the East and West have held that the Blessed Virgin died; but they acknowledge that Epiphanius was impelled to his opinion by a most laudable respect for her high position as Mother of God. The silence of the Holy Scripture regarding the Blessed Virgin's death does not prove that she was immortal, as Holy Scripture was written chiefly for the purpose of transmitting to posterity the history of Christ's life and the early preaching of the gospel. The opinion which St. Epiphanius evidently favors, that the Blessed Virgin was immortal, shows, however, the great respect and reverence which was always entertained for the Blessed Virgin by the early Church, and it was this great respect which made St. Epiphanius doubt that the Blessed Virgin died.

The general opinion of the Fathers of the Church is that she really died and was buried, and St. Gregory, in a sermon on the Assumption says: "O Lord, we venerate this feast day on which the Holy Mother of God endured temporal death." In regard to the year of her death, there is among the

early Fathers considered that her actual age was estimated with certain belief on the greatest weight of age of sixty-three Damascene states sons, Marcianus posed to Juv Jerusalem, to bri temple which they stantiole the Virgin that it mig honor. Juvenal place of -Mary Jerusalem at Geth body was not there her interment, visited the tomb, garments which

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