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Considerations on Catholicism by a Protestant Theologian.

(Charles Starbuck in Sacred Heart Review.)

Turning away for a week or two from Dr. Hodges' lectures, I wish to take account of some popular misapprehensions of Catholic usages of the See of Rome.

We never can understand the ceremonies and usages of Rome, especially those which respect the person of the Supreme Pontiff, unless we bear in mind the profound conservatism of the Roman See. This is an inheritance from the Roman Republic, and has corroborated the conservatism essentially inherent in religious authority, above all in a supreme religious authority. Herbert Spencer remarks that religion, as the central regulative force in human society must necessarily be disinclined to innovation, and that not merely of substance, but of outward form, even in what may appear slight particulars. Thus the archaic tinge of language in Bible translations and in liturgies is rightly treated by Spencer as bespeaking their central place in literature and society. It is not the business of religion, as some shallowly imagine, to run after all the shiftings of human speech and human fashions, but rather to maintain that in both which the religious instinct has recognized as best fitted to embody the dignity and sublimity of the Gospel.

Of course this instinct may be pushed to excess. Do what we will, the outward forms of human language and society will slowly change. There come times when the speech and the secondary forms of religion may be found antiquated, and lose their hold over men. Religion ought not to suppress the instinct of innovation. This, too, is inherent in humanity. It is only by means of it that the thoughts of God can be finally realized. Yet undoubtedly, as Spencer maintains, innovation ought to follow and conservatism to control.

We must therefore regard it as an eminent illustration of divine providence that in the early centuries the lead of the Church, and in the Middle Ages the lead of the most active half of the Church, was entrusted to so deeply conservative a city and bishopric as the city and bishopric of Rome. Otherwise it is hard to know what would have become of Christianity. It was by the power of a simple steadfast conservatism (with very little creative richness in it) that St. Polycarp saved the churches of Asia Minor from going to pieces. It was in the exercise of a much wider and deeper conservatism, far more receptive and more plastic (conservatism and innovation in one), that Rome more than once saved the Universal Church from going to pieces. As Dante urges, and as Bellarmine remarks, the fitness of imperial Rome to become the matrix of the central See was doubtless the providential reason why Peter and Paul repaired to Rome.

The way in which men judge the peculiar observances of the Roman Church depends very much upon their prior attitude towards that Church itself. Take an illustration. Next to Rome perhaps the most conservative part of Europe, in point of outward usages, is England. From Northumberland to Cornwall it teems with all manner of quaint ancient ceremonies. Now let an Irish Catholic go to England, especially from America, and he may easily find matter of sarcasm from one end of the land to the other. Let an American of English and Protestant blood (like the present writer, for instance) go to England, and how different his attitude will be! Doubtless he will find a good deal to smile at, and a good many observances which he may think it is about time to disuse. Yet in general his feeling will be that of kindly interest. He will note how the quaint usages have sprung out of the life of the people, and how they have contributed to the continuity of national character, without impeding its gradual modification.

With reference to the Roman primacy there are two essentially different schools of Protestants. The original Protestantism simply treated the Papacy as Antichrist, and as having been Antichrist from the beginning. This assumption, it is true involved some curious embarrassments. The Protestants could not well cut themselves off from the first three centuries, for here was the Church of the Martyrs. In this time paganism was overcome. Flacius, the first great Protestant historian, owns annoyedly that Clement, in the first century, assumes an inherent primacy in the Roman Church. He is displeased that Ignatius, about 115, is so deferential to Rome. Had he known the since-discovered inscription of Saint Abercius, about 130, in which he describes the Roman Church as "the queen radiant in gold," he would have been still more disturbed. Saint Irenaeus, about 180, with his reference to Rome as so sound and eminent a standard of

doctrine, appears to him already little better than a Papist. Moreover, the earliest Fathers, Clement, Ignatius, Justin, Irenaeus, talk about the Eucharist, and about justification and good works, in a way which Flacius owns to be considerably nearer to Rome than to Luther. In short, Flacius, who was deeply read in the Fathers, virtually concurs in what an American writer for the Church History Society remarks, that the beginnings of Roman Catholic history go back a good deal farther than is commonly assumed.

How now is this disagreeable fact to be treated? Flacius, of course, will not own that Peter was Pope, but he declares that there was a good deal of the Pope in him. He charges him with ambition, worldliness and contentiousness. In short, he puts as much of the devil into him as he dares do without denying outright that he was a great apostle, and that he laid the foundations of the Church. He can not deny that somehow or other the Papacy from the beginning was deeply implicated in the eminence of Peter, but he thinks that he can cut the knot to the advantage of the Reformation by making over to the Popes everything that is unchristian in Peter, of which he seems to have found more than anybody else has ever thought of finding. In this way he flatters himself that he shall be able to allow Peter his place as an apostle of Christ, and yet maintain that his Roman successors are Antichrist. It is a very heroic treatment of church history, but then Flacius was a very heroic nature. He is the man who first taught, not that our fallen nature is deeply corrupted by original sin, but that since the Fall the substance of our nature is itself original sin, and that it is blasphemous to maintain that the Holy Spirit even begins to renew it before death or the day of judgment. A man who can dare this can dare anything.

However, Flacius was too deeply read in history not to be moved by facts. St. Paul, we know, declared that even in his time the mystery of iniquity, or rather of lawlessness, was already working. Flacius has made the astounding discovery, which was certainly completely hidden from Paul, that the place in which it was working was the bosom of the apostle Peter. Yet Flacius shrinks from what would seem the easy leap of declaring that the Antichrist in Peter was separated at his martyrdom from Christ in him, and reappeared unaltered in the first following Roman bishop and his successors. What stayed the hand of Luther's disciple? The consideration that most of the early Popes died martyrs. He did not see how they could be at once witnesses for Christ and apostles of Antichrist. He contents himself with making the workings of Christ in them all the time feeble and the workings of Antichrist all the time stronger, until the Peace of the Church under Constantine. Then at last, in St. Sylvester, Antichrist appears unmasked, and has ever since occupied the Roman chair.

However, all Protestants were not willing to own that Antichrist came to the chair in Sylvester, and that the true doctrine of God and Christ was determined by their great enemy. This led to an amiable dispute among them, of which we will speak next.

The Seal of the Confessional.

(From the Antigonish Casquet.)

A couple of weeks ago a sacrilegious theft was committed in Montreal, a ciborium containing a number of consecrated hosts being stolen from a church. A few days later a man presented himself to one of the priests attached to this church and expressed a wish to go to confession. When the priest proceeded to hear his confession he explained that he knew the place where the stolen ciborium with its sacred contents was hidden, and would reveal the hiding place for five hundred dollars. The priest promptly went in search of a policeman, but before his return the pretended penitent had vanished. As this may possibly seem to some ill-instructed persons like a breach of the seal of the confessional, it may be well to say a few words on this subject.

A priest must not under any circumstances, not even to save his own life or for the lives of others, reveal what he hears in sacramental confession. By sacramental confession is meant a confession which is made for the purpose of receiving absolution. But if the confession is not made for this purpose, it is not sacramental, the seal of the confession is not stamped upon it, and therefore the seal cannot be broken. The priest hears a great many secrets outside the confessional. In many cases it would be a grievous sin for him to reveal them, but it would not be breaking the seal of the

confessional. But on the other hand, there are some cases wherein it would be a grievous sin for him not to reveal such secrets, whereas he must never on any account reveal what he hears under the seal of confession. But a confession which is evidently a mock confession, a mere pretence, not made with any desire to receive absolution, but simply for the sake of sealing the priest's lips has no sacramental character whatever, and such was the confession made by this sacrilegious thief, or accomplice of a thief, in Montreal. So far from being bound not to reveal what he heard from this thief, the priest would have committed a grievous sin if he had not revealed it.

CASES IN POINT.

To illustrate still better the difference between a mock confession and a genuine one, we may refer to two novels in which the seal of the confessional plays a very important part. One is "Idols, or the Secret of the Rue Oubausee d'Anten," by the French lady, recently deceased, who wrote under the name of Raoul de Navey. An English translation of this story, by Anna T. Sadlier, was published in the Antigonish "Aurore." In this story a young priest is called to hear a sick man's confession. Arriving at the house the man says, in substance, "I have just killed your father; I am not sorry for it; I don't desire absolution; I merely tell you this in order to shut your mouth lest you might suspect me." The priest's brother is arrested for the murder and convicted, and the priest stands by, knowing the real criminal, but unable to use his knowledge to save his brother, being bound, says the novelist, by the seal of the confessional. This merely shows Raoul de Navey's ignorance, for in such a case there was no sacramental confession, and therefore no seal. The only thing to keep the priest's lips sealed was the fear of giving a scandal to them who would suppose that he had violated the seal. But this scandal he might have prevented, as the priest in Montreal has prevented it, by making a public declaration of the circumstances of the case. Not only was de Navey's priest free to point out the murderer of his father, he was bound in conscience to do it, in order to save the life of an innocent man.

WHERE THE SEAL OPERATED.

The other novel referred to is "A Victim to the Seal of the Confessional," by the Rev. Joseph Spillmann, S. J. This is founded upon a real occurrence, which caused an innocent Belgian priest to be sentenced to penal servitude for life on a charge of murder, the truth coming out when his sacrilegious made a public death-bed confession of the crime. In the story, the sacrilegious, having committed the murders in conscience-stricken, he goes to the priest and confesses the crime and desires absolution. The priest asks him to confess his other sins, for he has been an irreligious man for many years, but he refuses to confess anything else. The priest sees then that the confession is sacrilegious, he cannot give this man absolution. But, though sacrilegious, the confession is sacramental, since the man has made it with a view to receiving absolution. He sends the man away unabsolved, but the seal of the confessional is on his lips, and when he finds himself charged with the murder, he cannot clear himself by making known the real criminal. More than this, if he would merely mention the fact that the sacrilegious had come to his room at such an hour, he would put the officers of the law upon the track, but the seal of the confessional does not even allow him to do that. For the man comes to the priest's room at that hour simply and solely for the purpose of making a sacramental confession, and if the priest were to mention that he had seen him at that time, it would lead others to suspect the nature of his confession, and this would be breaking the seal. So the poor confessor has to suffer himself to be convicted of murder and sent to the New Hebrides till the public confession of the real criminal.

This ought to make clear to any reader of the "Casquet" what the seal of the confessional is not and what it is.

"In undertaking the Spanish War," says the Guidon, "we declared to the world that we sought not the conquest of a single foot of territory. We declared that Cuba is and should be free. Is she free, now? Will she ever be? It looks doubtful. She has only changed masters, and is robbed by Americans instead of by Spaniards. While the Filipinos fought for their liberty against Spain we declared them more fit to govern themselves than were the Cubans. Now that we have possession of their island we think otherwise. What will the end of it all be? Retribution, sure. With men God can wait. They are immortal and He has all eternity in which to repay them. With nations it is not so. They must be rewarded or punished here. The history of the world shows how God has so dealt with the nations, and we greatly fear that unless we change our day of reckoning will not be long delayed."

It is a notable fact that "that terrible doctrine of infallibility" which Dr. Mirvet found so impossible

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Mr. P. L. Campbell, the well-known general merchant of Fortune Bridge, P.E.I. was troubled with severe pains in his back and hips for over two years. At length he became aware of the fact that backache was simply a symptom of kidney trouble and did not hesitate long in taking Doan's Kidney Pills, and was promptly and permanently cured. Here is his statement: "I was in an awful state for two years with pains in my back and hips. Some mornings these pains were so severe that I couldn't stoop to lace my boots. I started taking Doan's Kidney Pills, and one box so completely cured me that I have been perfectly well for over a year now and free from the least trace of pain."

appeals to the agnostic Mr. Mallock as the divinest the most logically inevitable, of the Christian dogmas. As to the case of Galileo, which the lamented English scientist hyped on so incessantly during his decline, it is now ascertained that Dr. Mirvet once publicly quoted Huxley as saying that in the contest between Galileo and the cardinals, "the cardinals had vastly the better of the argument,"—so unsatisfying was the astronomer's presentation of his theory. Of course the case of Galileo in no way involves infallibility; but in presence of the great wave of fault-finding that is sweeping over the world it may be well to say that disobedience to ecclesiastical authority is a sin, as truly as heresy is. And the fact that Congregations or Popes acting non-ex-cathedra may have made a serious mistake once or twice or even four times, in two thousand years is a slim excuse for disloyalty or disobedience.—Ave Maria.

Seventy-seven martyrs, who were put to death for the faith in China, Cochinchina and Tonquin during the years between 1798 and 1856, were recently beautified together. The "process" had begun under Gregory XVI, was continued under Pius IX., and was advanced to a happy conclusion by the Holy Father gloriously reigning. Of the new Beati, 14 (of whom 4 were bishops and 10 priests) were Europeans, and 63 (of whom 29 were priests and 34 laymen) were natives. Of the 34 lay martyrs, one was a captain of the royal guard, two at least were physicians, and several were soldiers. Indeed the army and navy have been well represented in recent beatifications. On June 10, for instance, the title of Blessed was conferred on a Carmelite, Father Dionysius of the Nativity, known to the world as Pierre Bertholo, who served in the French and Dutch navies, and took part in the battle of Malacca in 1629. He is set down in one account as "pilot and cosmographer to the Portuguese King." Even after entering the Carmelite Order, he was called out of the novitiate to assist the Portuguese in defending Goa against the Dutch. During the engagement he wore his friar's garb, and, crucifix in hand, exhorted the men to bravery. On the same day Father Bertholo, a demy of the Cross, who as a young man had fought under the Portuguese flag in India, was beautified. Both of these fighting saints suffered martyrdom. Thus it is clear that the atmosphere of the camp is not necessarily fatal to piety. Some of the most profoundly religious and fervent men we have ever known were officers or privates in our own army and navy.—Ave Maria.

Catholics may have a "pull" in our public schools, as our critics declare, but the Jews certainly have most of the "push." Here are two sentences from the New York Sun that ought to be read very carefully: "Of the 640 girls who passed successfully the examinations for admission to the Normal College, this month, the majority were Jews. Of about 800 graduates from the public schools admitted to the free city college for boys, the vast majority also are of the Jewish race, the proportionate number of other races being even smaller than among the girls admitted to the Normal College." Here again the Jew proves his supremacy as a financier. First, no child ever earns more than a few hundred dollars in the shops during the years when he ought to

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be at school; secondly, the child who receives an education is enabled thereby to earn as much money in a day as the uneducated man does in a week; thirdly, in the nature of things, the man who works with his hands must forever be the slave of the man who works with his head. In view of these facts, is it too hard a saying that many parents sell their children into servitude for a few hundred dollars? The Jew is often lauded and persecuted for the very qualities of foresight and thrift that ought to bring him credit and honor.—Ave Maria.

MISCELLANEOUS.

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A teacher was explaining to a little girl how the trees developed their foliage in the spring time. "Ah, yes," said the little miss, "I understand; they keep their summer clothes in their trunks!"

Dr. J. C. Houston

Physician and Surgeon. SOURIS, P. E. ISLAND. GRADUATE McGILL UNIVERSITY, 1898. OFFICE: Next door to Merchant's Bank.—April 4th, 1900. 3mo.

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