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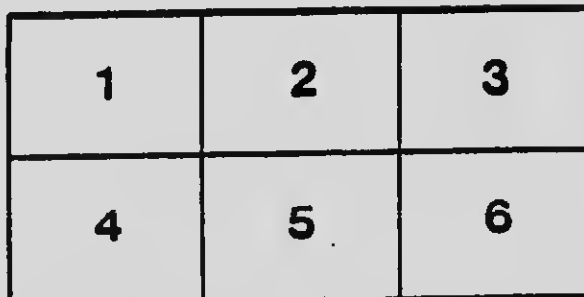
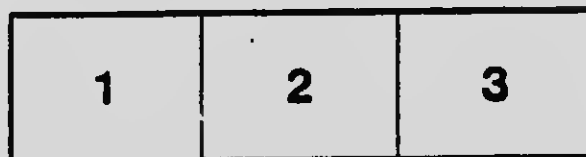
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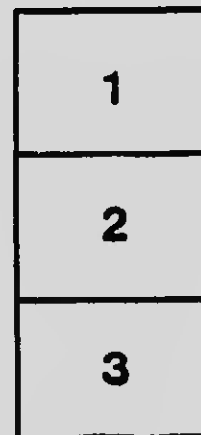
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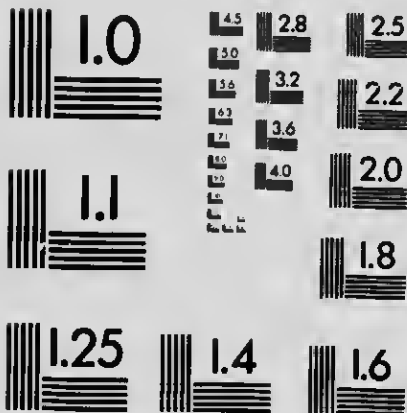
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Pastoral Letter

Addressed to

The Clergy and Laity of the Diocese
of Halifax,

by

THE MOST REV. CORNELIUS O'BRIEN, D. D.

Archbishop of Halifax.



252.1

Halifax Printing Co., 161 Hollis Street,
1902.

1902

Cornelius, by the Grace of God and favour of the Apostolic See, Archbishop of Halifax:

To the Clergy, Religious Orders, and Laity of the Diocese, Health and Benediction in the Lord.

DEARLY BELOVED:

The solemn warning of the Apostle—"Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour," (Pet. V. 8), does not appeal as powerfully to the hearts and consciences of all professing Christians as it should.—Many think they can disregard the adjuration to be sober, and to be watchful over their inclinations and their senses, and still be safe. Others, alas! an increasing number, deny the necessity and reasonableness of the words of the Apostle, asserting that there is no devil to devour us, and no hell in which the wicked shall suffer for the crimes committed in this life. To make men believe this is the greatest triumph of Satan since his victory in Eden. For it not only fosters a recklessness of moral evil, and destroys a most salutary restraining influence, as well as a powerful motive to repentance, but it, also, kills, so to speak, the intellect, by deadening its reasoning faculties, and thus unfitting it for the reception of supernatural truth. The seed takes root and flourishes only in good soil; a mind that reasons aright is the good soil in which alone the seed

of Faith will produce fruit unto eternal life. The intelligence which is so darkened by sophistries, or corrupted by a love of pleasures, as to see no contradiction in assigning the same lot to the nobly virtuous, and the degraded slave of vice, is not merely thorny, or rocky, it is hopelessly barren soil. This explains why the evidences of Revelation, so luminous in themselves, make no impression on so many. They do not reason. With all the pretention to superior knowledge, with all the ponderous platitudes in *Quarterlies*, and the delirious declamations in the Press and on Platforms about love of reason, the hard irreversible fact is, they do not reason. In past ages Satan gained many victories through the passions of men: in our day he seeks to dominate their intellects. Considering the extent of disbelief in his personality, and in eternal punishment, his success has been very marked.

What the voice of Nature proclaimed in all ages, and among all Nations, viz., that there was a spirit of evil, an enemy of mankind, who could exercise a certain malign influence over the unwary, that, the word of God confirmed. Shallow unbelievers win senseless applause from shallower crowds by declaiming against the absurdity of a spirit with tail and horns, and armed with a pitch fork, or shovel, and complacently imagine they have proved the non-existence of a personal devil. What the Catholic Church teaches is that the devil is a person, that is an individual being endowed with intelligence and will, and can act on us through suggestion, and temptations of various kinds. He is a spirit: hence he has no body, though he may, God permitting, assume a visible form, just as we read of the angels appearing to the Patriarchs. We must always bear in mind that visibility is not an essential quality of personality. So

much is said and written about the power of human suggestion, one can readily understand that the devil, who was created in an order superior to ours, can exercise this power in a greater degree, but never to the extent of destroying our free will. This belief, more or less distorted in popular tales, and overlaid with poetic fictions, yet unvarying in its central idea, is found in the religions of all primitive peoples such as the Egyptians, Assyrians, Chaldeans and Hebrews, as well as in that of the Greeks and Romans, and is clearly traceable to one original source. The story of the temptation and fall of our first Parents in Eden (Gen. III) was handed down from sire to son, and with it some of the infused knowledge regarding the supernatural possessed by Adam and Eve. The Sacred Scriptures leave no doubt of the existence of an evil spirit, ever the enemy of the human race. In the books of the Old Testament he is spoken of as "the enemy," "the adversary" (Satan); and in the first and second chapters of the Book of Job we are given an insight of his character as the malicious tempter of the virtuous. In the third chapter of Zachary we see him as the accuser of those whom he has duped, to prevent, if possible, their repentance. And the Book of Wisdom tells us that "God created man incorruptible, and to the image of His own likeness He made him. But by the envy of the devil death came into the world."—(II, 23, 24.) To this sacred writer the Fall in Eden of our First Parents, with death as one of its consequences, was no myth, or poetic legend, but a sad historic fact. The existence of the devil as a being endowed with intelligence and will, his enmity to mankind, and his power to injure, can be proved from various passages of the Old Testament.

In the fuller Revelation of the Gospel Dispensation we find

the devil occupying a place second only to that of the Redeemer, in the great drama of the Fall, and the Restoration, of the human race. It was "to destroy the works of the devil" that the Son of God appeared." (1 John III, 8). Our Lord Himself gives testimony to the fact that the devil endeavours to frustrate His work. Explaining the parable of the man who sowed good seed, over which his enemy sowed cockle, He said—"He that soweth good seed, is the Son of man, and the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom, and the cockle are the children of the wicked one. And the enemy that sowed them is the devil."—(Luke X, 37, 38, 39). In the eighth chapter of St John, He sets before us with startling distinctness the malicious opposition of Satan, to his doctrine, which would make men free, and clearly indicates that the battle was between Himself, who came from the Father of truth and light, and the devil who was "a murderer from the beginning, and he abode not in the truth; because truth is not in him."—(Ver. 44). This spirit of evil whom our Lord saw "falling like lightning from Heaven" (Luke X, 18) ere the creation of man, is identified by St. John as the "great dragon, the old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world."—(Apoc. XII, 9). And in his Gospel this same Apostle tells us that the devil put it into the heart of Judas to betray his Lord and Master.—(XIII, 2). With the death of the Lord on the Cross the devil thought his victory complete; but it was that very event which broke his tremendous power over mankind, and opened the way for the Restoration. The devil may, indeed, still win minor victories over individuals, and communities, and perhaps kingdoms; but never again can he enslave the human race. Yet, is he still intent on doing evil, nor will

he ever cease his exertions to draw souls from God, and frustrate, in as much as he can, the work of God's Church. He is going around seeking to deceive the intelligence, to inflame the passions, to misdirect the will. That he is an actual personal being, capable of doing all this, the teachings of Holy Scripture, and, in an especial manner, our Lord's words, leave no possibility of doubt. That he is doing this in our own day we have abundant proof. If we leave out his insidious and malign influence on the minds of men, how can we explain the opposition, frequently the fierce dislike, not to say hatred, of many good citizens and kind neighbours, to some work of the highest charity, to the Gospel of Christ, to the teaching of Religion in the school, or to the recognition of God's law in political life. We cannot think all such men are consciously wicked. They have been, however, and are, unwary; hence they have been misled by the catechrys, and sophistries of designing ones who are of "their father the devil." In the rush of modern life few men reflect, fewer reason out conclusions from well-defined premises. The great majority form no opinions of their own. They accept them ready made from the newspaper, or magazine, or lodge room. This condition of mind makes it comparatively easy for the devil to exercise a subtle influence against good through many otherwise worthy men, and to achieve his great modern triumph of hoodwinking them as to his existence. Let such as these remember that our Lord explicitly taught the reality of a personal devil, and that He said:—"He that is of God heareth the word of God. Therefore, you hear them not, because you are not of God."—(John VIII, 47).

This spirit of evil, this malignant opposer of Jesus Christ and His work, cannot be supposed to dwell in the presence of

God, or to enjoy any of the glories of Heaven. "Like lightning" (Luke X, 18) Christ saw him fall from Heaven; "he was cast forth unto the earth; and his angels were thrown down with him."—(Apoc. XII, 9). As he is the irreconcilable opponent of God in way and works, so his abode and surroundings must be in direct contradiction to those of the Almighty. Peace, order, happiness, glory, unending joy, are some of the characteristics of Heaven: hence unrest, disorder, bitterness of spirit, shameful degradation, unceasing anguish must prevail in the abode of Satan, or in what we call hell. So obvious is this that a moment's reflection must make it apparent to any reasonable being. The traditions and literature of all nations attest to the universality of a belief in a place of happiness and a place of suffering in a future life. In this the ancients gave evidence of a proper perception of the requirements of justice.

Now, there is one undeniable fact which has been, and is, continually verified in the history of man, viz., the existence of virtue and vice, and of those who practice the one, or cleave to the other. Just as we have the two leaders, Christ, our Lord, and the devil; so we have their respective followers. The war between good and evil began in Eden, and will end only with the last man. No one can be neutral in that unceasing fight. Either we are with Christ, obeying and serving Him, or we are not under His banner. Let no one plead that he is simply standing aloof, and not actively opposing Christ. Our Lord has said:—"He that is not with me, is against me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth."—(Math. XII, 30). We are either, then, "children of God," or "children of the devil." Many, indeed, may be for years in the army of Satan, and finally, through God's mercy, may repent and pass over to the side of

virtue; whilst some may serve God for a time, and fall away ere night. But all will die either in the service of God, or in that of the devil. We refer, of course, only to those who have attained the full use of reason. But not only is it "appointed unto all men once to die," but, also, "after this the judgment."—(Heb. IX, 27). Death, therefore, does not end all: a future life remains for the followers as well as for the leaders, and consequently for them a Heaven, or a hell. Can anyone seriously believe that the eternal lot of these two classes will be, or should be the same? All had free will; all had the power to pray: all had the light of reason. Whilst we do not know the depths of the wisdom and the power of God, and whilst we cannot explain His counsels, nor understand their secrets, yet this much we know,—He is infinitely good, merciful and just: He created all for Heaven, and wills all men to be saved, and gives to all sufficient grace, yet, many through a misuse of their free will will be lost forever. In life they made their choice: they lived according to the flesh, not according to the spirit of Christ; they refused to bow to His sweet yoke, or to listen to the teachings of His Church. Before the judgment seat they are not so much condemned by the judge, as by their own choice in life. If this were better understood men would have fewer difficulties in recognizing that the future lot of the wicked must be hell, as that of the just is Heaven.

The Catholic Church understands by hell a place where those who die in the service of the devil are eternally punished with him. Apart from its unending duration, and everlasting banishment from God, we do not assume to define the nature and intensity of that punishment. In our present state the human mind can form no adequate conception of the joys of Heaven, for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the

heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him."—(1 Cor. II, 9), nor of the sufferings of hell. Nor can the language of earth describe the one, or the other. We know, however, that the just in Heaven will be supremely happy, the impious in hell utterly miserable.

The Holy Scriptures takes away all doubt as to the sufferings of the lost. As might be expected, the misuse they made of their intelligence, their scoffs at the humble and virtuous, their pride of life and idle pleasures, now seen in their vileness, now turned into instruments of torture, will be fruitful subjects of useless regret. Seeing the salvation of those whom they despised, and "afflicted," and whose "labours" they took away, they shall say, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit:—"These are they, whom we had sometime in derision, and for a parable of reproach.

We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour.

Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints.

Therefore, we have erred from the way of truth; and the light of justice hath not shined unto us: and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us.

We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction and have walked through hard ways: but the way of the Lord we have not known.

What hath pride profited us; or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us?

All those things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on."—(Wisdom V, 3-9).

Were this all-consuming remorse the only punishment of the lost soul, it would surely be a dreadful misfortune to be forced to endure it forever. Even in life, when men cannot be as keenly sensitive as in the spirit world, and when they can still find some form of pleasure, or distraction, remorse will not unfrequently cause the murderer to give himself up to justice. A shameful death on the gallows seems preferable to a life tortured by the remembrance of his guilt. This will help us to form some faint idea of the unhappy state of those whose self-reproach, and bitter remorse are in proportion to their realization of their folly, and their knowledge of what they have lost for all eternity, and how easily they might have attained everlasting bliss. Hence the sorrowful wail,—“we fools,”—hence the unavailing confession,—“therefore, we have erred from the way of truth,”—hence the humiliating admission, “what hath pride profited us; or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us.” Alas! this is no overdrawn picture; it has been limned by the Holy Ghost—“Such things as these the sinners said in hell.”—(Wisdom V, 14).

Our Divine Lord Himself has thrown a fuller light on the sufferings of the wicked after death. His words are accommodated to our modes of speech, which can only figuratively describe the hereafter; yet, we may be certain they are such as can best express to mortals the nature of the torments of hell. Our Lord could speak no untruth; He could not make use of exaggeration, or seek to inspire superstitious fear. His aim was to instruct, to teach the truth as He Himself avers—“For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth.”—(John XVIII, 37).

Now, in the parable of the self-indulgent rich man, and the

beggar Lazarus, He is giving one of his familiar instructions and adapting Himself to the capacity of His hearers. There can be no mistaking the lesson conveyed. Of all His parables it is the clearest and most direct in its meaning. The manner of life of the beggar and the rich man is described. Then came death : but here let our Lord Himself speak.—“And it came to pass that the beggar died, and he was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. And the rich man also died and he was buried in hell. And, lifting up his eyes, when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom : and he cried, and said : Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.”

“And Abraham said to him, ‘Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life time, and likewise Lazarus evil things ; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

And, besides all this, between us and you there is fixed a great chaos : so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot, nor from thence come hither.’”—(Luke XVI, 22-26). Words of ours can add nothing to this vivid narrative. When the Son of God speaks, we should listen, and endeavour to realize the full import of the craving of the rich man to have a cooling finger applied to his tongue. “Figurative language,” the devil will suggest to his victims ; “figurative language,” they will repeat, and smile as in superior wisdom. Yes, the language is “Figurative,” but the reality is always greater than the figure ; the suffering more intense than its description. And it is never ending,—for “there is fixed a great chaos” which no one can cross. It is Jesus, the lover of souls, Jesus who suffered

and died for our sake, Jesus, "the way, and the truth and the life" (John XIV, 6) who asserts this.

Not only does our Saviour proclaim the existence of hell, He, likewise, definitely teaches that some shall be condemned thereto. Few truths are more frequently referred to in Holy Scriptures than that the Lord shall one day judge all, and shall award to each one punishment, or happiness, according to the requirements of justice. That day is variously called the "day of judgment," the "day of wrath," (Apoc. VI, 17), the "day of the Lord," or the "great day."—(Jude I, 6). But we need only read the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, in order to realize why it holds such a prominent place in Holy Writ, and why the best and noblest of mankind have ever spoken of it with awe, and reflected upon it with salutary fear. Hypocrisy and fraud have their triumphs in life; like "whited sepulchres which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness," (Matt. XXIII, 27), successful scoundrels who have robbed and defrauded within the law, whose "strength was the law of justice," who "let no meadow escape their riot," (Wisd. II, 8), are admired, and receive the homage of a deceived, or it may be of a corrupt society. Seeing this temporary triumph of the sinner, many begin to doubt God's providence; the enemy suggests that "we are born of nothing; and after this we shall be, as if we had not been: for the breath of our nostrils is smoke; and speech a spark to move our heart, which being put out our body shall be ashes; and our spirit shall be poured abroad as soft air: and our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist." (Wis. II, 2, 3). How accurately the sacred writer gives us the gist of the teachings of modern materialism. It only lacks the pomp-

ous phraseology, and juggling with philosophic terms, to pass for an extract from some crude article on the so-called opposition of science to Religion. Yet by such chaff as this eyes were blinded in the past, as in our day, and many came to believe that the whole drama of human life, and of the soul's existence, was acted out in one fleeting episode. They forgot the "day of the Lord" is to come, when all sham shall be exposed, the inner "filthiness" of the "whited sepulchres" laid bare, and God's ways and dealings with our race justified. Our Lord describes how all this shall be done,—“And when the Son of man shall come in His Majesty, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the seat of His Majesty: and all nations shall be gathered together before Him, and He shall separate them, one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats.”—(Math. XXV, 31, 32). The separation of good from bad is made. On one side shall stand those who have kept the word of God in Faith and works; on the other the wilfully sinful. To each side a sentence shall be addressed by the Son of man sitting “upon the seat of His Majesty.” To those on the right He shall say—“Come ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” To those on the left—“Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.” To each and all of us, one or the other, of these sentences shall be addressed: and it will be irrevocable. No appeal, no hope of revision: the mercy of God superabounds during life: a ready pardon is accorded to the repentant; the blackest guilt is forgiven, and the foulest soul cleansed, when the sinner turns to God with an humble and contrite heart, and makes use of the means instituted for his sanctification. But with death the hour of mercy ends:

the time of probation and free choice is past : the part we have selected whilst here, that the "just judge" will confirm as ours forever. Were we to think occasionally and seriously on the inevitable judgment, and the awful issues it involves, we would assuredly lend a more ready ear to the pitying and pleading voice of our loving Father seeking to wean us from our folly. "O ye sons of men, how long will ye be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity and seek after lying."—(Psl. IV, 3).

Yes, with all our loud talk about our love for truth, the fine scorn affected for the small prevarications of the poor and needy, the sad fact remains that the sons of men love vanity, and seek after lying. The great primary truths of God's existence, power and providence are clearly written over the face of nature : our free will, our accountability, our immortality, are easy conclusions of our reasoning faculties ; our conscience like a faint, yet unmistakable, echo of God's voice, raises the warning cry—"fly from evil ; do good,"—and the ever-living witness and bearer of God's message to man, the Church, teaches with authority justified by her credentials the safe road to eternal happiness. Notwithstanding all this, what do we frequently behold ? Men shutting their eyes to these evidences of unchangeable truth, and eagerly perusing an account of some physical phenomena by which it is sought to prove the non-existence of a Creator, or of a human soul. They will never read a book whose author reasons logically from well-established principles, nor one in which the doctrines of our Religion are explained and demonstrated. Yet, they pretend to be anxious to learn the truth. Is their search, then, an honest one ? Is their rejection of long-held beliefs a rational, or a reasoned one ? Surely not. They wish to not believe, and the ever-vigilant tempter leads them gradu-

ally on to spiritual blindness and indifference. Denial of a personal devil is, usually, the first step; then disbelief in eternal punishment. They may admit that the great and good will live forever, but they will proclaim the extinction, at death, of the sinner. Now, our Lord, in His description of the judgment day, meets and refutes this most illogical and mischievous error, for He says:—"And these (the wicked) shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just into life everlasting." The suffering of the former is as enduring as the happiness of the latter. (46). But that punishment was not made for them, nor they for it. The Kingdom of Heaven was "prepared from the foundation of the world" for man; hell "was prepared for the devil and his angels," and only by reason of culpable disobedience and misuse of grace and opportunities, will any man be condemned thereto. That some will be in this category the words of Christ leave no room for doubt; how many, or who they will be, no one, except in general terms, dare assert. Let us all, however, be on our guard against the pernicious error of disbelief in the existence of a spirit of evil that can, and does tempt us to sin, and of a place of eternal punishment for the wicked after death. "Let us," in the words of a great and holy writer, "descend frequently to hell whilst living (that is by reflecting on it) so that we may not be condemned to it when dead."

Grace and peace be with you all, dear Brethren.

By virtue of faculties received from the Holy See, we grant the same dispensations in the Lenten Fast and Abstinence as last year. The Rules, therefore will be the same. We earnestly exhort the Faithful to compensate this indulgence of the Apostolic See by alms and good works, and by an avoidance, during

Lent, of amusements and entertainments which are out of harmony with the penitential season.

This Pastoral Letter shall be read in every Church of the Diocese, on the first Sunday after its reception that the Pastor shall officiate therein.

✠ C. O'BRIEN,
Archbishop of Halifax.

J. B. MORIARTY.

Pro. Sec.

HALIFAX, Feb. 11th, 1902.

