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# CATHOLICS AND NONCONFORMISTS

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BISHOP OF CLIFTON

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CATHOLICS  
AND  
NONCONFORMISTS  
OR  
DIALOGUES ON CONVERSION

BY  
THE BISHOP OF CLIFTON



LONDON  
CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY  
69 SOUTHWARK BRIDGE ROAD, S.E.

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## PREFACE

THE following Dialogues have been written from a somewhat different point of view from that usually adopted by Catholic writers on the spiritual phenomena experienced by religiously minded Protestants. It has generally been taken for granted that such experiences are delusions, if not hypocritical pretensions ; and because they have been proved to have been so in some instances, it is often concluded that such is the case generally. This is a short and easy way of settling the question as far as Catholics are concerned ; but the only impression it leaves upon the minds of pious Protestants is that they are not really understood, and this renders them more impervious than ever to Catholic arguments.

The Catholic Church possesses the whole Revelation of God to men, and her circle of Theology embraces all truths, and therefore the true explanation of all real spiritual phenomena, and all the true doctrines that are held by every section of separated Christians. We do not compromise our own principles by admitting to the fullest extent the reality of such subjective

experience, and the value of those truths held by these our "separated brethren"; and they are much more likely to lend a willing ear to those truths which they now ignore, if they see that those which they hold and love are a substantial part of Catholic teaching, and really in perfect harmony with those doctrines which they imagine to be opposed to what they hold most precious.

I have submitted these Dialogues to Catholic theologians, who assure me that I have not in any way misrepresented Catholic doctrine, especially that of the Council of Trent on Justification. I submitted the Dialogue (No. V.) on "Justification and the New Birth" to a leading Wesleyan minister, and he says: "I have carefully read your paper, and am quite satisfied with the account you give of Justification as understood by Wesleyan Methodists. A favourite quotation with Mr. Wesley, when speaking of saving faith, was 'Faith that worketh by love.'" I have received several sympathetic letters from Nonconformist ministers, which encourage me to hope that my little papers may do something towards promoting that mutual understanding of each other which must precede any serious attempt at reconciliation.

The first Dialogue is introductory; the second, third, and fourth are an examination of all the instances of Conversion related in the Acts of the Apostles, in order to see how far the process of Conversion is connected with, or is independent of, the Sacraments. The fifth Dialogue



is on Justification, as set forth by the Council of Trent, and by the Wesleyan Catechism. The last paper is somewhat discursive, and the account given of a scene at a Methodist class-meeting may be objected to as improbable, though it will hardly be pronounced impossible. The discussion seemed to require some practical result ; and as the argument had not proceeded far enough to justify "Mr. Winter" submitting himself to the Church, it appeared less untrue to life to describe the conversion of his sister.

✠ W. R. B.

CLIFTON, *Lent*, 1898.



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# CATHOLICS AND NONCONFORMISTS

BY THE BISHOP OF CLIFTON

## I.—BREAKING THE ICE.

**M**R. PAUL WINTER (*entering a railway carriage*). Good morning, Mr. Southcote. It is a bright day at last, after all the wet weather.

MR. PETER SOUTHCOTE. It is so ; thank God for it. Are you going far to-day ?

MR. W. Not very far ; but I am glad to find you alone in the carriage. I want to have a word or two with you, as I believe you are a Catholic.

MR. S. Is it about religion, then ?

MR. W. Yes.

MR. S. Why, you don't mean to tell me that you have any idea of becoming a Catholic ! I thought you were such a bigoted Methodist that there was no hope of your being converted.

MR. W. I trust, my friend, that I am converted, for I know in whom I have believed. Indeed, it is the knowledge of what my Saviour

has done for me that makes me wish to have a word with you on the subject of religion.

MR. S. Oh, that's it, is it? So you want to convert me to Methodism. Well, it is very kind on your part, but I would rather stick to the old religion of my fathers.

MR. W. No, my friend, you mistake me. I don't want to make you or any one else change your religion. But I do pray that you and every one else should know the Lord as I know Him, and have the joy and peace in believing that comes from faith in the Blood of Jesus.

MR. S. Will you tell me how you obtained this peace of which you speak so feelingly?

MR. W. Willingly, for it is a pleasure to speak of what fills one's heart. I am free to confess that it was not always so with me. I was careless and worldly, and only intent upon getting on in this world. Some of my friends got converted, but I thought it was no affair of mine, until one of my companions met with an accident on the railway, and was hurried into eternity without a moment's warning. Our minister preached a sermon about it on the text, "Ye know not the hour when the Son of Man cometh." He said, "It might have been you—and what then?" I felt the words go through me like a shot; and I felt that I had a soul to be saved, and that I must set about getting it saved without delay.

MR. S. And what did you do?

MR. W. Well, at first I thought I must try and be very good. So I said my prayers regularly

and kept away from the public, knocked off cursing and swearing, and tried to take patiently all the chaffing I got for my change of life.

MR. S. And did you feel then that you had got what you wanted ?

MR. W. No. That was just the worst of it. The more I tried to be good, the more wicked I felt myself ; and many a time I felt tempted to give it all up as a bad job, and to think I must have committed the unpardonable sin, and was doomed to perdition.

MR. S. Excuse me, my dear friend, but you seem to have been trying to save yourself, instead of looking to Christ to save you in His own appointed ways.

MR. W. Why, that is exactly what I was doing ; but I did not expect you to have seen that, for I thought that you Papists were always trying to work out your own salvation.

MR. S. So we are ; but not in the sense in which you understand it. Our Catechism says : " We cannot of ourselves do any good work towards our salvation." But I interrupted you.

MR. W. Well, I was saying that I was trying hard to work out my salvation, and got worse and worse instead of better ; when one day I was reading the Scriptures, and I came upon that place where it says : " By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast " (Eph. ii. 8, 9). Then I saw that if I would be saved I must accept salvation as a free gift, purchased for me by the Blood of Christ. I

gave up my own vain efforts, trusted myself to the merits of my Saviour, and now, bless God, I know in whom I have believed. I know now the meaning of those words : "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii. 16). Ah, my friend ! that witness of the Spirit is a blessed thing to have within one.

MR. S. Well, my dear friend, I have been very much interested in hearing your account of your own soul. It touches me too, because it reminds me in many things of my own conversion to God.

MR. W. What do you mean ? You don't mean to say you, a Roman Catholic, have had any experience like that ?

MR. S. Well, we Catholics do not talk much about what goes on between our own souls and God. We think it is not good to be boasting of any favours we have from Him : we are taught that graces are to be acted upon rather than talked about. But, as you are evidently quite in earnest about these matters, I don't mind telling you that I have gone through a struggle very much like yours. I was brought up by good Catholic parents ; but unfortunately when I was about twenty years old I got in with some wild companions, and I fell away into sin, and for months and even years gave up prayer and all pious practices. But God had mercy on me, and brought me back to Himself.

MR. W. And how was that ?

MR. S. There was a Mission preached in our



church by some Fathers—Redemptorists they are called—and I was persuaded with some difficulty to go and hear them. The very first sermon I heard startled me, for the preacher described me exactly, my restlessness and dissatisfaction with all my frivolous pleasures, and a secret longing that I had to get free from the bondage of sin, and to be able to serve God with a clean heart. I went to the sermons again and again—in fact I could not keep away. Every day I got more and more miserable, and yet the dull feeling of despair gave way to a confidence in the mercy of God, and a hope of pardon.

MR. W. But did not your preacher point you to the Saviour, and tell you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”?

MR. S. There was no need for him to say that, for we were all Catholics and we all believed in Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the world. I knew that He had died for me, and had atoned for my sins on the Cross; and the more I thought of that the more sorry I felt for having been such a wicked, ungrateful sinner, after all that our Lord had done for me.

MR. W. But did not you search the Scriptures to find some text that would bring you the assurance of pardon?

MR. S. No. I knew quite well how I was to get that.

MR. W. What do you mean?

MR. S. Why, I knew that I had to go to Confession.

MR. W. Oh! There comes in the soul-

destroying error of your Church, which puts a sinful man in the place of Christ, and teaches you to lean on an arm of flesh instead of on the living God. No wonder you went on getting more and more miserable.

MR. S. But I didn't ! At last I made up my mind. I went to Confession, and confessed all the sins of my life, as far as I could remember them—they started up before me just as if I had only committed them yesterday, and I felt more sorry for them than I can express, for I saw how they had crucified my loving Saviour. I resolved, come what might, never to commit them again, and I had confidence that the same grace that had made me sorry for them would enable me to resist temptation in the future.

MR. W. But how did you get the assurance of pardon ?

MR. S. Why, as soon as the priest gave me Absolution, I knew that my sins were forgiven, and I felt as if a tremendous load had been lifted from my soul.

MR. W. Ah, my poor friend, I fear you are deceiving yourself ! you believed the priest could forgive your sins. It is sad to see how souls are led astray by the cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive. Why, the Scripture says : "Who can forgive sins but God alone ?"

MR. S. Where does the Scripture say that ?

MR. W. Why, I can show it you in the New Testament. (*Taking it out of his pocket and turning over the leaves.*) Here it is ; St. Luke, chapter 5th, verse 21 : "Who is this that speaketh

blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" There it is, so plain that he who runs can read.

MR. S. Yes, I see. But who said it? What is the beginning?

MR. W. (*reading*). "And the scribes and Pharisees began to say in their hearts: 'Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?'"

MR. S. Oh! and whom were they accusing of blasphemies?

MR. W. Well, it was the Lord Jesus Himself.

MR. S. And do you really mean to say that you are going to take the cavilling words of scribes and Pharisees as if they were the inspired Word of God?

MR. W. Well, I must confess I have made a mistake. I knew the words were in the Bible, and I have often heard them quoted against priestly absolution, and I did not think of inquiring who said them, or against whom they were said.

MR. S. Perhaps there are some other texts of Scripture which you have put a wrong meaning upon, from taking them away from their context.

MR. W. But surely, even the scribes and Pharisees were right in saying that none could forgive sins but God alone?

MR. S. Were they right in accusing our Lord of blasphemy because He said to the paralytic "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee"?

MR. W. No, because He was God. If He had not been God, it would have been blasphemy to have said it.

MR. S. Is that quite certain? It seems to me that our Lord claimed the power as man, for He said, "That you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," and He healed the paralytic. The people who saw the miracle "glorified God that gave such power to *men*" (Matt. ix. 8). They did not as yet know that He was God; but they saw that He had power given Him from God, as Nicodemus said: "No *man* can do the miracles which Thou doest, except God be with him" (John iii. 2). If God can give power to men to work miracles, why cannot He give men power to forgive sins?

MR. W. God forbid that I should say that He cannot give that power. But this is a power that belongs to God alone, and He will not give His glory to another.

MR. S. Were not the Apostles men like you and me?

MR. W. Of course they were.

MR. S. Did He not give them power to heal diseases, to cast out devils, and even to raise the dead?

MR. W. Quite true.

MR. S. Then why could not He have given them power to forgive sins?

MR. W. He could have done so, but He did not.

MR. S. I thought He said, "Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained" (John xx. 23).

MR. W. Why, you are quite a Bible Christian.

You have got the better of me there. But then the Apostles had special powers given to them.

MR. S. Well, we believe that our priests have had the same powers given to them.

MR. W. But how do your priests forgive sins?

MR. S. "By the power of God in pronouncing the words of absolution," as the Catechism says.

MR. W. Well, I must say it does not seem so unreasonable when one looks at it in that way. Still, I would rather get my forgiveness direct from my Saviour Himself.

MR. S. If you were a criminal in prison lying under sentence of death, and the Queen were to grant you a free pardon, and send a messenger to tell you of it, would you refuse to leave the prison because Her Majesty did not come herself to open the prison doors?

MR. W. No, I should not be such a fool. I should only be too thankful to get my liberty by whatever means it was given to me. But I don't see why you should go to a priest, when you can go direct to Christ Himself.

MR. S. Tell me, my friend, when you were seeking pardon of your sins, did you see our Lord with your eyes, or hear the words from His own lips?

MR. W. No, I didn't see anything, nor did I hear any words; but the words that I read in the Bible spoke to my heart just as if I heard them, and I felt in myself that I was forgiven and saved.

MR. S. I am not going to dispute what you tell me you felt. But when our Lord has given

the power of forgiving sins to the priests, it cannot be wrong to go to them for forgiveness. In fact, it seems to me to be great disrespect to our Lord to refuse to go to those to whom He has given this power.

MR. W. But don't you believe that it is possible to get one's sins forgiven without confessing to a priest?

MR. S. Oh yes! the Catechism says that by perfect contrition sins are forgiven before we go to Confession.

MR. W. What do you mean by "perfect contrition"?

MR. S. A hearty sorrow for sin, proceeding from the love of God.

MR. W. Thus, if you are sorry for your sins because you love God, your sins are already forgiven?

MR. S. Yes.

MR. W. Then what is the use of going to Confession if you are already forgiven?

MR. S. We Catholics, who know that our Lord instituted Confession, could not have true contrition without having the resolution to go to Confession; and of course we must fulfil that resolution. Besides, we cannot always be certain without the possibility of mistake that our contrition is perfect. Don't you think that some of your people who make such a loud boast of their sins being forgiven, are now and then deceiving themselves?

MR. W. Yes, I admit that. One of our hymns says :—

“ Mistaken souls that dream of heaven,  
And make their empty boast  
Of inward joys, and sins forgiven,  
While they are slaves to lust.”<sup>1</sup>

MR. S. I am glad to hear you acknowledge that. We are nearer agreement than I ever thought we could be.

MR. W. Then if I understand you aright, you make out that the priest with his Absolution is not put instead of Christ, but is a means whereby the sinner more easily and more certainly gets to Christ.

MR. S. Yes, that is the substance of it. I know when Father Cuthbert was giving me Absolution, it was just as if I were kneeling at the foot of the Cross, and the Precious Blood of Christ were pouring down into the very depths of my soul, and washing away all my sins.

MR. W. Well, I never thought you Catholics had any idea about really going to Christ when you went to Confession. I always thought it was a mere device of the Evil One to lull you into a false security that kept you away from Christ. Still, there are a great many things that puzzle me. I thought you could do nothing without going to the Virgin Mary instead of Christ. She does not seem to come into your scheme of salvation at all.

MR. S. Oh, but she does though. My dear mother dedicated me to the Blessed Virgin when

<sup>1</sup> I have been told on very good authority that this hymn is not in the Wesleyan Hymn Book, and so would not be quoted by a Methodist. Still, the sense of it would be admitted.

I was a baby; and I believe she has watched over me ever since, and that it was through her prayers that I was converted and brought back to God. I know I prayed to her to get me true contrition, and I believe she obtained the grace for me. I didn't say anything about her to you, because I thought you wouldn't understand.

MR. W. I suppose you thought it would be casting pearls before swine. But it seems to me, when I think over what you said about your own conversion, that what you described was not quite scriptural. The Scriptures, especially the Epistles of Paul the Apostle, make salvation to rest upon faith—"by faith is a man justified, and not by the works of the law." When the Philippian jailor asked, "What must I do to be saved?" the Apostle did not tell him to go to confession, like your Father Cuthbert, but answered straight out, as we Methodists do now, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There is the vital point where your religion and mine differ. We direct poor perishing sinners to the Lord Jesus, who cries, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." I don't wish to say a word against your priests, or your forms and ceremonies; but my immortal soul wants something more. It wants Christ, and nothing but Christ can save me, or give peace to my soul. Ah, my dear friend, I am afraid your religion may do very well for fair weather, but when the dark days come, and the light of this world fades away, and the realities of eternity are brought face to face



with a man on his death-bed, what becomes of all your absolutions then ?

MR. S. Really, my dear friend, you take my breath away ! But, may I ask, have you never heard of a dying Protestant becoming a Catholic on his death-bed ?

MR. W. Well, we had a case a few weeks ago at the workhouse. It was brought before us guardians, and the chaplain to the workhouse complained that the priest had been proselytizing ; so we had the whole case thoroughly sifted.

MR. S. Did you find that the priest had been to blame ?

MR. W. No. It seemed that the poor man said he could not get any comfort from the parson's ministrations—and between you and me I am not surprised at that, for I don't believe the parson is a converted man himself. But, however that may be, the poor fellow begged the master to let Father Baker come and speak to him. He did so, and Father Baker went to see him every day until he died. The parson did not seem to mind much until the priest wanted to have him buried as a Catholic, and then he made a serious complaint against the priest.

MR. S. And which side did you take ?

MR. W. Well, I am all for liberty of conscience ; and if the poor man really wished to have the priest instead of the parson, why, let him please himself, said I. I know if it had been the other way, and a Papist had told the master that he wanted to turn Protestant, we should have all backed him up.

MR. S. No doubt you would. But did you ever hear of a Catholic wishing to turn Protestant on his death-bed ?

MR. W. I don't know that I ever did. Still, if he had, I should have maintained his liberty of conscience.

MR. S. But now, my friend, if this poor man, on the threshold of eternity, wished very earnestly to die a Catholic, it does not look as if he thought Catholic Sacraments of no avail when face to face with eternity. Did you find out what made him wish to die a Catholic ?

MR. W. He told the master that he had seen Michael O'Grady die in the next bed to him, and he thought he died so piously and peacefully, and the ministry of the priest seemed such a comfort to him, that he had a great wish to have the priest come and prepare him for death. Poor fellow ! He did not know any better. But give *me* the religion of the Bible.

MR. S. I say Amen to that. But, now look here. Did you hear what the priest did to that poor man before he died, God rest his soul !

MR. W. The master said that the priest gave him what you call Extreme Unction. I don't wish to offend you, but what good could that do to him ?—a mere form.

MR. S. (*taking a New Testament from his pocket*). Not so fast. You say, "Give me the religion of the Bible." Now I find in St. James v. 14 it says : "Is any man sick among you ? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name

of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man : and the Lord shall raise him up : and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another that you may be saved." Surely this is very much like what you say was done to this poor man. They brought in the priest of the Church, he anointed him with oil in the name of the Lord, he confessed his sins, and they were forgiven him. You say, "Give me the religion of the Bible." Tell me, do any of you Wesleyans ever send for the priests of the Church when you are dying to anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord ?

MR. W. No ; I cannot say that I ever heard of a case. We don't believe in priests. Besides, our Bible says, "elders of the Church," and when our people are dying, they send for the class-leader and the minister and any man of prayer that they know, and they pray over him. The Scripture says, "the prayer of faith shall save the sick." Not the priest or the oil. Besides, that was in the days of the Apostles, who could work miracles, and raise the sick, and make them whole.

MR. S. But the Apostle here gives a general rule. He does not tell them to search for a priest who was accustomed to work miracles ; but any priest would do. We need not quarrel about the word "priest." I am told it is the short for "presbyter," which originally meant one older than others, and so your Protestant translators wrote it "elders." You say that your

ministers and class-leaders do not follow St. James's direction. How can you, then, pretend that your religion is the religion of the Bible?

MR. W. Do you mean to tell me that *your* Church goes by the Bible?

MR. S. We do not take the Bible as our "sole and sufficient rule of faith";<sup>1</sup> but we do maintain that in the Catholic Church alone is every verse of the Bible given its full force, and really acted upon now in this nineteenth century as it was in the days of the apostles.

MR. W. Well, you must not expect me to admit that. But I am very glad to have had this conversation with you, for it has made us understand each other better, and given me a great many things to think over. Now that the ice is broken, we must have some more talk another time. Here is my station, so I must say goodbye, and may the Lord bless you!

MR. S. May God bless us both!

<sup>1</sup> Catechism of the Wesleyan Methodists.

# CATHOLICS AND NONCONFORMISTS

BY THE BISHOP OF CLIFTON

II.—TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY.

**M**R. WINTER (*entering Mr. Southcote's parlour*). I hope I am not disturbing you this evening?

MR. SOUTHCOTE. Not in the least; I am delighted to see you. Pray take a seat. One enjoys a rest after the work of the day is over.

MR. W. Thanks. The fact is, I have been thinking a good deal about our little chat in the train the other day, and I thought I should like to continue the subject, if you have no objection.

MR. S. I should like nothing better. No subject ought to be so interesting to Christians as that which concerns their eternal welfare.

MR. W. Most true. And yet I generally find that this is about the last subject that men care to talk about.

MR. S. I suppose we Britishers are rather shy

of talking in a way that may lead people to put us down as "canting hypocrites," and so we are apt to hide our true feelings from one another, lest we should be thought humbugs. Besides, sometimes we talk very piously, and mean it at the time, and then something takes us unawares, and we don't act up to our profession, and this makes us unwilling to profess even what we do really think and feel.

MR. W. There is something in that. But to return to our former conversation: there were some things that surprised me about you. In the first place, I was astonished at you, a Roman Catholic, carrying about a New Testament in your pocket.

MR. S. Well, perhaps it is not very commonly done among us. But I asked Father Baker how I could carry out the advice Father Cuthbert gave me about making a short meditation, if possible, every day. He said if I could manage to read a few verses of the Gospels every morning, it would give me something to think of; so when I start by an early train I do it on my way.

MR. W. A very good practice, whoever put it into your head. I should like to make acquaintance with that Father Baker of yours. I have seen him at the Board, when he has had to speak about some of his poor people, but I have never been introduced to him. Does he ever call on you?

MR. S. Oh yes! In fact he said he might look in this evening (*the bell rings, and the door*

*opens. Father Baker enters).* Good evening, Father, I am right glad to see you. Let me introduce my friend Mr. Winter, though perhaps you have met him before.

FATHER BAKER. Yes, Mr. Winter, I think we have often met at the workhouse, although I have never before met you in private. Let me take this opportunity of thanking you for the kind and generous way in which you took my side about that poor man the other day.

MR. W. No need to thank me for that, Father Baker. I should have gone against you if it had been a case of one of your people wanting to turn Protestant. I am for religious liberty. Let every man follow his own conscience in the sight of God.

FR. B. Yes ; a man who acts against his conscience must always be wrong. That is a first principle of moral theology.

MR. W. I am astonished to hear you, a Roman Catholic priest, say that.

FR. B. I did not say that a man who followed his conscience was always right. Saul of Tarsus confessed afterwards, "I indeed did formerly think that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts xxvi. 9). A man is bound to take all the means in his power to get his conscience enlightened, so that he may not mistake evil for good, or falsehood for truth. But you seemed in the middle of an interesting conversation, which I fear I interrupted.

MR. S. We were continuing a conversation

we had in the train the other day. We had been discussing the case of that same poor man, and Mr. Winter was telling me that your Reverence had given him Extreme Unction, and I was pointing out to him the passage in St. James which speaks of it. Mr. Winter thought it did not hold now, because miracles are no longer worked by that anointing. I did not see exactly what answer to make to that. Have you ever known a sick man raised up by this Sacrament, Father ?

FR. B. Yes, many and many a time. I have known cases where the doctors have given up all hope of recovery, and yet, after Extreme Unction, the patient rallied in a wonderful and unaccountable manner, and gradually got quite well. But what is much more common, and indeed takes place so often that it might be called a usual effect, is, that after Extreme Unction the patient recovers a certain amount of strength, during which he has time to prepare much better for his passage into eternity. Our theologians say that this Sacrament does not effect cures by way of a miracle, but rather by co-operating with the natural means used to restore health. But, if you have been looking at the passage, you will have noticed that the Apostle lays special stress on the spiritual effect, the remission of sins, and the insuring of salvation.

MR. W. Yes, sir, and that effect seems to be the result of the prayer of faith, not of the priest's oil.

FR. B. Still, the Apostle joins the two things together, and it is not for us to separate them.



The inward grace of a sacrament is more important than the outward form ; but when God has ordained one as the means of imparting to us the other, it is not for us to attempt to obtain the grace without making use of the outward form. It is the same with Baptism and the Sacrament of Penance.

MR. W. Ah ! Mr. Southcote and I were talking in the train the other day about Conversion. I was telling him what the Lord had done for my soul, and he rather surprised me by telling of his own conversion, as he called it. I did not know before that you Catholics held with conversion.

FR. B. If you had known our good friend several years ago, and compared what he was then with what, by the mercy of God, he is now, you would have called it a conversion too.

MR. W. Well, I don't care what name it is called by so long as a man has experienced a saving change, from death to life. But what puzzled me about it was, that it seemed mixed up somehow with a priest and his absolution, saving your presence. Now my change of heart came straight from the hand of the Most High. Bless the Lord for it !

FR. B. You never can bless God enough for whatever grace He has given to you. But if He has given you grace *without* the Sacraments, and given grace to our friend here *through* the Sacraments, is that any reason why you should find fault ?

MR. W. I hope I am not finding fault ; but I

am puzzled. The Scripture is so plain : " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There is no going to confession there. Our friend put me in a bit of a fix about the anointing of the sick ; but I still say, Give me the religion of the Bible. " To the law and to the testimony : if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them " (Isa. viii. 20).

FR. B. Very good. Our Version has it " they shall not have the morning light," and this is virtually adopted by your Revised Version. Let us, then, go through the various instances of conversion that are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and see how far they had to do with Sacraments or were independent of them.

MR. W. With all my heart. I love nothing better than the study of the blessed Word of God. I have got my Testament with me. Where shall we begin ?

FR. B. Let us begin at the beginning—the conversion of three thousand on the Day of Pentecost (chap. ii.). May that Holy Ghost who came then to be the life and soul of the Church of God, quicken our minds to discern aright His Divine operations in the hearts of men ! From the 14th to the 36th verses St. Peter preaches to the assembled multitude, and testifies of the resurrection of Jesus, whom their rulers had slain, and who was now at the right hand of God as Lord and Christ. The 37th verse says : " Now when they had heard these things they had compunction in their heart, and said to Peter and the

rest of the apostles, What shall we do, men and brethren? But Peter said to them, Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

MR. W. I beg your pardon, sir, but my Testament has a different reading.

FR. B. Well, let us have it.

MR. W. "Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart."

FR. B. Well, is not that the same as having compunction?

MR. W. Yes, I suppose it is; but what follows is not the same: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." The word "repent" does not seem the same as "do penance," which has a smack of legalism about it.

FR. B. I suppose that is because you have been accustomed to regard penance as something Popish, and implying the use of scourges, hair-shirts, and such like. These things may be the outward signs of penance, but real penance is in the heart—it is only the short for penitence—and is a true sorrow of heart. I know some Protestants maintain that repentance is only a change of mind, but you Wesleyans know that it means a good deal more than that. You would not believe in a man's conversion unless he had passed through a time of real sorrow for his sins.

MR. W. You are quite right. We should call that a "stony-ground conversion," and expect the man soon to fall away. Our popular Life of John Wesley says: "Repentance is not a vain formality, but a deep sorrow for having offended God, manifesting itself not in tears only but in fruits meet for repentance." (*Life*, by Rev. M. Lelievre, p. 261.)

FR. B. I felt sure that John Wesley agreed with us on that point. But what I want you to see is that St. Peter told them to be baptized, each one for the remission of his sins. Now, let me ask you, Do you ever tell people who are seeking salvation to be baptized for the remission of their sins?

MR. W. No, not exactly, because for the most part our people have been baptized, and we do not think it is right to baptize them again.

FR. B. But supposing you found on the "penitent bench," among the "anxious inquirers," a man who had never been baptized, because his parents were Baptists or Plymouth Brethren, would you tell him that he was to get the forgiveness of his sins by Baptism?

MR. W. When we were satisfied that he was really converted, we should tell him that he must be baptized according to the Lord's ordinance, as a sign of his being joined to the Church.<sup>1</sup>

FR. B. But you would not teach him that it was for the forgiveness of his sins?

<sup>1</sup> I have been told on good authority that Wesleyans now do not inquire whether their converts have been baptized or not; and that they would not baptize a man unless he insisted upon it himself.

MR. W. No. We should be afraid that he might put too much trust in the outward form. "The kingdom of God is within you."

FR. B. Then your religion does not seem to be quite the same as the religion of the Bible?

MR. W. But surely, sir, you would not have me pin my faith to the doubtful interpretation of a single text like that? Let us go on to the next passage about conversion.

FR. B. Stop a minute. We have not quite done with this passage yet. Verse 40 says that St. Peter said a great many more things to them, and exhorted them: "Save yourselves from this perverse generation."

MR. W. "Save yourselves!" Is that in my Bible? It sounds like telling them to trust in their own works. But I see it is in my Bible too.

FR. B. The next verse tells us how they did it. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized," as your version has it; and it says that there were about three thousand of them added to the Church. They had a clear and definite means of salvation put before them, and they gladly embraced it by offering themselves for baptism. They were told to be baptized for the remission of their sins. They were baptized, and the sacred narrative seems to take it for granted that they received forgiveness of their sins in and through the Sacrament of Baptism.

MR. W. I do not know that it ever struck me in that light before. But the next passage does not say a word about Baptism. Acts iv. 4 says:

“Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed ; and the number of the men was about five thousand.”

FR. B. Do you infer from that that they were not baptized ?

MR. W. Oh, I suppose they were baptized as a sign of their faith.

FR. B. Then I do not quite see how it supports your theory. The Baptism was mentioned in the former instance, and the sacred writer would take it for granted that his readers would understand that the same Sacrament was administered in the second passage, and with the same effect as before.

MR. W. Really, Father Baker, you are too clever for me. Even when the Scripture is against you, you twist it round to support your argument.

FR. B. I should be very sorry to twist the sacred writings to aid any cause, however good. But the next conversion is one which you will acknowledge is a typical one, for the great Apostle of the Gentiles says that “for this cause have I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus might show forth all patience, for the information of them that shall believe in Him to life everlasting” (1 Tim. i. 16).

MR. W. Ah yes, there was a true conversion ! No priestly interference there ; all direct from God. The blessed Jesus Himself appeared to Saul in the midst of his headlong rage against the followers of Christ, and converted and changed his heart in a moment. There was an instan-

taneous conversion, a conscious one. I rest my case on Saul of Tarsus.

FR. B. Well, I am quite content to rest my case upon the conversion of St. Paul also.

MR. W. What do you mean ?

FR. B. I mean that Saul of Tarsus received forgiveness of his sins by means of the Sacrament of Baptism.

MR. W. You do not expect me to take your word for that ?

FR. B. Not at all. Let us look at the Scripture.

MR. W. Very well. I read that when he said, "Who art Thou, Lord ?" the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest ; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Then he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?" There was his conversion, without any human agency whatsoever. The Lord would have all the glory to Himself.

FR. B. But read on a little further. How did our Lord answer him ?

MR. W. "And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts ix. 6).

FR. B. There you see our Lord did not want to keep all the work of his conversion to Himself. He might have forgiven him his sins there and then, as He forgave Mary Magdalene, but the new convert was to submit himself not only to Christ, but to the Church of God which he had persecuted so cruelly. Ananias, a Christian, and probably a priest of Damascus, was miracu-

lously informed of Saul's conversion, and his hesitation as to the sincerity of Saul was removed by our Lord Himself.

MR. W. The Bible says nothing about his being a priest. It says he was "a certain disciple."

FR. B. Well, we will not dispute about that. At any rate, he was a member of the Church, and was commissioned to tell the future Apostle what he must do. You see he already believed, and was fasting and praying for three days. He had been consoled by a vision of one coming and laying his hands upon him that he might recover his sight. Ananias went, laid his hands upon him, that he might "receive his sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." We are then told, "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and rising up he was baptized." You see Baptism comes in again.

MR. W. Yes; but after the real spiritual work had been done by the grace of God in his soul. Then he received the outward sign.

FR. B. I suppose you will admit that the Apostle himself knew best what really took place, both outwardly and inwardly. He gives a more detailed account of his baptism in the 22nd chapter, the 12th verse.

MR. W. (*reading*). "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I



looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Well, I confess this does look as if his sins were to be washed away by Baptism; but it says, "calling on the name of the Lord." It says elsewhere, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. x. 13). It was the name of the Lord that saved him, and washed away his sins, not the water.

FR. B. I see you are a difficult man to convince. But surely the plain sense of the words implies that at the same time the water washed his body the Holy Ghost applied the Blood of Christ to his soul, and washed all his sins away. The Apostle could not have meant to mislead those whom he was addressing; and if he had not meant that his sins were washed away in the Sacrament of Baptism, he would have used different words, and cautioned them against falling into the mistake which you seem to think we Catholics have fallen into about it.

MR. W. But you see, sir, that your interpretation goes against all that I have been taught on the subject of Regeneration. One of our chief grievances against the Established Church is that these High Church parsons will insist upon cramming our children's minds with the doctrine of

Baptismal Regeneration—a most unscriptural doctrine!

FR. B. Are you quite sure of that? You are in a vicious circle, my good friend. You start with the notion that Baptismal Regeneration is unscriptural, and then, when you are confronted with a passage of Scripture that plainly teaches it, you refuse the obvious meaning of the passage because it is against you. Are you not making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition?

MR. W. Really, Father Bakér! I thought you Catholics were all for tradition, and this is one of our most common grounds of complaint against you.

FR. B. There are two kinds of tradition. There is the "vain tradition" of error, from which St. Peter tells those to whom he wrote that they "were redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ" (1 Pet. i. 18), and there are the apostolic "traditions," which St. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to "hold fast" as the best defence against "the mystery of iniquity" which has been working ever since (2 Thess. ii. 7, 14).

MR. W. Why, you are turning all my favourite texts against me. I have always been taught that the "mystery of iniquity" was the spirit of the Romish Church.

FR. B. Yes; that is part of what Cardinal Newman calls "the great Protestant tradition of lies." But let us keep to our subject. You said that you were ready to rest your case on the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and that has landed

you in the dilemma of either confessing that sins are washed away by the Sacrament of Baptism, or of taking the words of Scripture in a non-natural sense. We took St. Paul rather out of his turn. There were other conversions before his which we have omitted.

MR. W. Yes ; in Acts viii. 5, I read : "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." Ah, sir, it does one's heart good to hear of Christ being preached, not forms and ceremonies, not the Virgin Mary, or sacraments, but *Christ*. And so, when the people received this blessed Gospel of Christ, "there was great joy in that city."

FR. B. Why were they so full of joy ?

MR. W. It was "joy in the Holy Ghost," of course (Rom. xiv. 17).

FR. B. But it says, "as yet the Holy Ghost was fallen upon none of them : only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

MR. W. Well, whatever that may mean, at any rate they believed in the Lord, and had peace and joy in believing.

FR. B. But were they not baptized ?

MR. W. Oh yes ! "When they believed . . . they were baptized, both men and women" (v. 12).

FR. B. Then they, like Saul, must have had their sins washed away in Baptism. Still, it seems they needed something else—the gift of the Holy Ghost. If you look at verse 15, "Peter and John, when they were come, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. . . . Then they

laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Here, again, you see there was another Sacrament, which we call Confirmation, and this required human instrumentality, which you seem to have such a horror of, except in the way of preaching. Why could they not have received the Holy Ghost through Philip?

MR. W. I suppose the Lord did not choose to give it through him.

FR. B. But why? He was a man of God, he had been chosen with Stephen and others for a special ministry, as being "full of the Holy Ghost" (Acts vi. 3), he preached and baptized. Nay, he worked miracles, casting out unclean spirits, healing the paralytic and the lame. What was wanting to him?

MR. W. The Holy Ghost is God, and He chooses His own times and ways.

FR. B. Exactly so; but it is for us reverently to watch His operations, so that we may understand how to obtain His spiritual gifts. The Apostles do not seem to have had any misgivings as to the effect of their imposition of hands. It did not occur to them to say, "Perhaps, as the Holy Ghost did not come at Philip's ministry, it may be doubtful whether He will come at ours." In fact, they seem to have taken it for granted that those converted by Philip would require something that Philip could not confer. Philip was a deacon. He could preach and baptize; but he could not give Confirmation, and so Peter and John came to administer that Sacrament to the new converts.

MR. W. Am I to understand that the Holy Ghost is given to believers now, when they are confirmed by a bishop? Why, the Bishop of Worcester came here last month and confirmed five hundred young persons. I don't believe that they received the Holy Ghost.

FR. B. No. However worthy a man his Lordship of Worcester may be, he is not a bishop in the Catholic sense of the term, and has no power to confer supernatural gifts, although the prayers that he used are almost identical with the prayers used by Catholic bishops before and after the conferring of this Sacrament. You Nonconformists seem to have got the notion that the Catholic religion is a sort of exaggerated copy of the Established Church, because of certain names and words which Anglicans retain, whereas it is a different thing altogether. Try and look at us as we are in reality, and not as something rather worse than the Church of England, but on the same lines. I suppose your difficulty is that you don't see effects follow a modern Confirmation, even by a Catholic bishop, similar to those that followed the imposition of the hands of the Apostles.

MR. W. That is exactly where the difficulty is.

FR. B. But you believe that there is a reality in believing in Christ?

MR. W. Oh yes; I have had experience of it, and blessed be God! I have it now.

FR. B. And yet Christ says: "These signs shall follow them that believe; in My name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with

new tongues ; they shall take up serpents ; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover" (St. Mark xvi. 17, 18). Have you experienced this ?

MR. W. No ; I cannot say that I have ; but perhaps it is owing to my weakness of faith.

FR. B. Do not you think there is good sense in what St. Gregory the Great says on this point : "Are we then without faith, because we cannot do these signs ? Nay, but these things were necessary in the beginning of the Church, for the faith of believers was to be nourished by miracles that it might increase. Thus we also, when we plant groves of trees, pour water upon them, until we see that they have grown strong in the earth ; but when once they have firmly fixed their roots, we leave off irrigating them" (*Hom. in Ev. ii. 29*).

MR. W. I thought you Catholics believed that miracles have never ceased ?

FR. B. Quite right. We believe that miracles are being worked now, as at Lourdes, and even at St. Winefride's Well. But they are not common, as they were in the early days of the Church—perhaps, as you say, through our weakness of faith. Still, they are not so necessary. But we have not quite done with these converts of Samaria. There is a terrible example of a sacrilegious abuse of the Sacraments. Simon the magician, we are told, "believed also : and being baptized, stuck close to Philip." But "when he saw that by the imposition of the hands of the apostles, the Holy Ghost was given, he offered

them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I shall lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." St. Peter said, "Keep thy money to thyself, to perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast no part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Do penance, therefore, for this thy wickedness; and pray to God, if perhaps this thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee. For I see thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity." Simon asked the Apostle to pray for him, but history tells us that he went astray still further, and became the first leader of heresy.

MR. W. He never could have been sincere at all. His conversion was a pretence from the beginning.

FR. B. I do not think the narrative quite bears that out. It says he "believed." I should be disposed to think that he was sincere at first, but that the old desire of dabbling in sorcery, and making gain out of his magic, ensnared him, and he gave way to the temptation, as we have known to have happened to some modern necromancers. However, there was hope for him, if he would do penance, for the Church had power to absolve him on his sincere repentance.

MR. W. It speaks of God's forgiveness: I do not read anything about confession and absolution.

FR. B. Well, let us go on to the next con-

version in the same chapter—the Ethiopian eunuch. St. Philip met him as he was in his chariot, reading the prophet Isaias.

MR. W. Ah yes, sir, it is a beautiful passage. He was reading the Word of God, and Philip “preached unto him Jesus.”

FR. B. How did Philip begin the conversation?

MR. W. The eunuch was reading aloud, and Philip said, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” and he said, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” And he took him into the chariot with him.

FR. B. Then the Scripture does not interpret itself, a human guide is required to interpret it. God has not promised to each individual a sufficient light of the Holy Spirit to make the sacred Scriptures clear.

MR. W. Why, sir, if I listen to you much longer, I shall find myself drifting away from all my moorings.

FR. B. Well, we must have a talk about the Bible another time, when we have gone to the end of what it tells us about conversion. How does the story of the Ethiopian eunuch go on?

MR. W. It says that “as they went on their way, they came to a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts viii. 36.)

FR. B. Then Philip must have told him something about Baptism. It could not have been with him a matter of secondary importance. In fact, it must have been, as St. Paul says according to your version, one of the first “principles of



the doctrine of Christ" (Heb. vi. 1). May I ask, is it so accounted among you? Do you often hear about it in the discourses of your ministers?

MR. W. Not very often. Sometimes they point out to us the errors of the Ritualists on this subject; and sometimes they defend our practice of baptizing infants, wherein we differ from our Baptist brethren. But I must confess the Baptists have strong Scriptural grounds for their practice of only baptizing believers, and that by immersion. You see that Philip and the eunuch went down both into the water, like the Baptists do. What do you think of their argument on that point, sir?

FR. B. Do you really feel much impressed by it?

MR. W. Well, you see, sir, we don't set much account on Baptism, so that I can hardly say that it affects me very seriously. Still, when discussing matters, in a friendly way, with my Baptist friends, they seem to me to have got the Scriptures a good deal on their side.

FR. B. I suppose you are inclined to say, like Jeremy Taylor does in his *Liberty of Prophesying*, "We have more truth than reason for our practice."

MR. W. Well, I do not know that I ever heard that before, but it does express very much what I feel. I have a sort of conviction that Infant Baptism is right; and yet, when I talk with Baptists, I do not seem to have got the Scriptures on my side.

FR. B. Perhaps the Ethiopian eunuch would

tell you, "How can I understand the Scripture, except some man should guide me?"

MR. W. There you are again. I suppose I must not read my Bible for myself?

FR. B. But you are confessing that you cannot understand it by yourself.

MR. W. I only wanted to know what you thought about the question.

FR. B. We start from a different principle. We believe that we are all conceived and born in original sin, from which we cannot be cleansed except by Baptism. Thus we should require a positive command from our Lord forbidding us to baptize infants before we could deny them admittance to that sacrament. Hence, when our Lord said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God" (St. Mark x. 14), we cannot help seeing in this a direct sanction for our practice. Not that we think it necessary to support our practice by a text of Scripture; for us the tradition of the Church is sufficient authority.

MR. W. Yes, tradition again. But what do you think about Baptism by immersion? I see that in the Book of Common Prayer it is stated that the Minister is to "dip the child in the water discreetly and warily." I never heard of any of them doing it; but there are the words, and it is only when the child is weak and sickly that he is to sprinkle it. This looks as if the Baptists had got hold of the ancient way of doing it.

FR. B. Well, so far they have. There is no doubt that immersion was the ancient custom,

and it was only when the Gospel reached these cold northern countries that people began to perceive that pouring water on the person was as really baptizing as dipping him in the water. Even in England St. Augustine and the early apostles of the English used to baptize in the rivers. We are very suspicious of that "sprinkling." Parsons are more careful now, but in days gone by it was often quite a chance whether the water even touched the child, whereas we hold that it must flow to be real Baptism. However, I am by no means satisfied that the Baptists do give valid Baptism, for I have received Baptists into the Church who have told me that the Baptist minister dipped them under the water, and made a prayer while he was doing it, but that he did not say the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." If such were the case, that would not be valid Baptism at all.

MR. W. Thank you, sir. I think I understand now what your Church holds about the doctrine and practice of the Baptists. But to go back to the Ethiopian eunuch. I wished to remark that, when the eunuch wished to be baptized, Philip said, "If thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest." And he answered, and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." You see he insisted first upon the necessity of saving faith in the Son of God; and it was not until he was satisfied of that, that he administered Baptism.

FR. B. That is exactly what we do now. We

satisfy ourselves thoroughly of the faith of the person who seeks Baptism, otherwise we should be exposing the Sacrament to profanation. Even in the rite itself, the candidate is questioned very particularly as to the principal articles of the faith, and concerning his desire for Baptism. I am afraid I must be saying "Good evening" now, as I have a convert who is coming for instruction to-night, and I must not disappoint him. I hope we may renew the conversation on some other occasion. Good-night, Mr. Southcote, and may God bless you all ! (Fr. B. *departs.*)

MR. W. Well, I must say that if all your priests are as "mighty in the Scriptures" as Father Baker, you must be much better instructed than I ever thought you were. I must have some conversation with our minister about those passages of Scripture, and then I shall be able to answer him better. Ministers have more time to study these points than we men of business have.

MR. S. Are you quite sure that there is any answer to what Father Baker urged ? It seemed to me that it was the plain, natural meaning of the text, though I will admit I had not thought so much about those passages before. However, "he that's convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."

MR. W. I hope I am not unwilling to learn, even from a Popish priest. But I must be going now. Thank you for introducing me to Father Baker.

# CATHOLICS AND NONCONFORMISTS

—  
BY THE BISHOP OF CLIFTON  
—

## III.—ONE BAPTISM FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS.

**M**R. WINTER (*being shown into Father Baker's study*). Good evening, sir. I thought I should like to have a little more conversation with you about Conversion.

FATHER BAKER. I am very glad to see you ; pray take a seat. We were going through the different instances of conversion in the Acts of the Apostles. I think we got as far as the Ethiopian eunuch.

MR. W. Yes ; but we had gone rather further than that ; we had been already discussing the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

FR. B. Ah yes, I remember ; we anticipated a little. Have you got your Testament with you ?

MR. W. Yes. The next conversion is that very significant one of the Centurion Cornelius. There you have an example of a man being converted, and receiving the blessed gift of the

Holy Ghost, without any Sacrament at all. And as he was the first Gentile convert, we may fairly take him as an example for all of us who come after him.

FR. B. Let us see. How did his conversion come about ?

MR. W. (*reading*). "He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord ? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter ; he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side ; he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (Acts x. 3-6).

FR. B. I beg your pardon. But does not that look as if prayers and alms had some merit ?

MR. W. Why, sir, I thought our friend, Mr. Southcote, said that your Catechism teaches that "we can do no good work of ourselves towards our salvation."

FR. B. Quite true. But it says "of ourselves." If the alms of Cornelius were meritorious, they must have had the grace of God to make them acceptable. Then again, according to your idea of conversion, the angel ought to have told Cornelius to persevere in praying until he felt in himself the assurance of his salvation ; whereas, if you look at the account St. Peter gives of it in the next chapter, verse

14, he seems to have not only said, "Send for Peter, who shall tell thee what thou must do," but "who shall speak to thee words whereby thou shalt be saved, and all thy house." You see the intervention of a priest, or Peter, is necessary for his salvation.

MR. W. Well, sir, the Scriptures of the New Testament were not then written, and the Word of God was to be found in the mouths of the Apostles; and we believe that the Word of God has a place in every genuine conversion. I know that it was through that blessed Word that I found peace to my soul.

FR. B. You are making rather a grave admission there; but we will discuss that point later on. In the meantime it is worth noting that human intervention was a necessary element in the conversion of Cornelius, just as it was in that of Saul of Tarsus. And I think St. Peter had a revelation, just as Ananias had, to direct him in the case.

MR. W. Yes. He was instructed by the vision of the great sheet that he was not to call any man common or unclean. And so he went with the messengers of Cornelius, and when he reached his house, "Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man." There, sir! How different is the action of your Pope, who calls himself Peter's successor. I have been told that he allows the poor superstitious people to fall down and kiss his feet. Why does he not imitate

Peter, and say, "Stand up; I myself also am a man"?

FR. B. Surely, my good friend, you must see that there is a time and place for everything. When the people laid the sick in the streets, that the shadow of Peter passing by might "overshadow them that they might be delivered from their infirmities" (Acts v. 15), we do not read of St. Peter telling them to take them away, for he was only a man. There was a special reason, besides his own humility, which made St. Peter decline the excessive honour paid him by Cornelius. Cornelius was a Roman, and had been accustomed to pay divine honour to the heathen gods and their images, and St. Peter wished to show him that such honour was due to God alone. If he, upon whose words depended his salvation, might not be worshipped in this way, how great must be that God to whom alone such worship could be offered! But what followed upon St. Peter's address to the centurion and his household?

MR. W. Yes, that is the point. "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God" (vers. 44-46). There, sir, you see there was no Baptism or Absolution, nor any Sacrament, but the Blessed Spirit did the whole work Himself.



FR. B. Were they not baptized then ?

MR. W. Oh yes ; Peter said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we ? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord " (vers. 47, 48). That is just as we teach, that the work of the Spirit has to take place first, and then the outward sign is given afterwards. Even you, sir, would admit that these Gentiles received forgiveness of their sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost before they were baptized.

FR. B. Certainly. I gladly admit everything that the Sacred Scriptures tell us. And more than that, this is a most valuable passage, as it illustrates our doctrine about perfect contrition forgiving sins before we go to confession. God is not bound to Sacraments. He can give His grace as easily without them as through them.

MR. W. Yes ; but does not this teach us that we can do without them too ? Surely this Scripture was written for our learning.

FR. B. Were there not very special circumstances that occasioned this particular outpouring of the Holy Ghost ?

MR. W. No doubt. It was the beginning of Gentile conversion.

FR. B. Exactly so ; and that accounts for it. We can form no idea in the present day of the intense feeling among the Jews that no one but a Jew had any right to the favour of God. They made a certain allowance in the case of proselytes, such as the Ethiopian eunuch is sup-

posed to have been ; but the idea of an uncircumcised Gentile being admitted to an equality with the chosen people was utterly abhorrent to the Jewish mind. It required a special revelation to induce St. Peter himself to obey the summons of Cornelius, and to preach Jesus Christ to him and his household. And though the Apostle himself might not have hesitated to baptize them if they desired it, yet it was so tremendous a departure from all Jewish ideas that those who accompanied St. Peter would have been his accusers at Jerusalem if they had not had ocular demonstration that "the grace of the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the Gentiles." When St. Peter was afterwards remonstrated with by the Jewish believers at Jerusalem, he defended his action by simply relating what had influenced himself. "If then God gave them the same grace as to us also who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ : who was I, that could withstand God ?" (chap. xi. 17). This explanation satisfied the Jewish Christians, and they said in wonder, "God then hath given also to the Gentiles repentance unto life." The same difficulty occurred again and again in Apostolic times. St. Paul's whole life was a continual conflict with the prejudices of his nation on this point. Even the decrees of the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem did not put an end to the question, which continued to trouble the Church until Jerusalem was destroyed, the Temple profaned, and Jewish worship in its completeness rendered impossible.

MR. W. Well, sir, you seem to have got an answer for everything.

FR. B. Excuse me, my good friend, but you remind me very strongly of what Cardinal Newman says about the Prejudiced Man.

MR. W. What is that ?

FR. B. (*taking down a book, and opening it*). Here it is : "We will suppose the prejudiced man to be in a specially good humour, when you set about undeceiving him on some point on which he misstates the Catholic Faith. He is determined to be candour and fairness itself, and to do full justice to your argument. So you begin your explanation : you assure him he misconceives your doctrines ; he has got a wrong view of facts. You appeal to original authorities, and show him how shamefully they have been misquoted ; you appeal to history, and prove it has been garbled. Nothing is wanting to your representation ; it is triumphant. He is silent for a moment, then he begins with a sentiment. 'What clever fellows these Catholics are !' he says ; 'I defy you to catch them tripping ; they have a way out of everything. I thought we had you, but I fairly own I am beaten. This is how the Jesuits get on ; always educated, subtle, well up in their books ; a Protestant has no chance with them ' " (*Present Position of Catholics in England*, p. 241).

MR. W. Now, really, that is too bad of you ! You are making fun of me, when I came to you with the simple desire that we might both learn the truth from the Word of God.

FR. B. I really did not mean to be rude. But you seem to me to put out of your mind altogether the possibility of the Catholic religion being true; and when the Scriptures seem to establish rather than contradict the Catholic doctrine, you do not treat such passages of Scripture with the reverence due to the Word of God, but as if it were a cunningly devised sophistry of man's invention.

MR. W. No, my dear sir, you do me an injustice there. I think of what you bring forward more than I like to show. But you cannot expect me to change my views on account of a single text here and there. I should not be here this evening if I were not deeply in earnest about the matter.

FR. B. I quite believe that, and am sorry if I hurt your feelings in any way. Perhaps it does not occur to you that *we* feel somewhat hurt at being regarded as clever special-pleaders?

MR. W. Well, sir, we must both try to think better of each other. But let us go on with our investigations. I see that in the eleventh chapter the preaching of the disciples who were dispersed by the persecution that arose about Stephen is mentioned: "And some of them went to Antioch, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord." It does not say that those who preached were ordained ministers, and it says nothing about their being baptized. But it does say that they preached the Lord Jesus. That is the true power of the Gospel, sir.

FR. B. Quite true. "The truth is," and always has been, "in Jesus"; and unless He is the main subject of our preaching, it will never save souls. As for the preachers being ordained, we have always had lay-preachers in the Catholic Church. Even women have preached, like St. Catherine of Siena and St. Rose of Viterbo. It is true those are exceptional cases, for we follow the rule of St. Paul who would not "suffer a woman to teach, but to be in silence." But even he made exceptions, as in the case of Phœbe, deaconess of Cenchræa; and many of our nuns now instruct others, chiefly women. But you will see that when the Apostles at Jerusalem heard of the number of converts at Antioch, they sent Barnabas thither; and, if we may argue from what happened at Samaria, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he went there in order to administer Confirmation.

MR. W. That is not mentioned in the Scripture. However, let us go on to St. Paul's first Apostolic journey. He and Barnabas were "sent forth by the Holy Ghost" to the Gentiles. It is in the thirteenth chapter.

FR. B. Yes. But it says that the Holy Ghost spoke to them "as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting." What do you suppose they were doing? When our Lord was upon earth, devout people "ministered to Him"; but how could they do so when He was glorified in heaven?

MR. W. I always thought it meant that they were engaging in prayer.

FR. B. Still, the expression implies some bodily service done.

MR. W. Well; I thought it only meant prayer. What do you understand by it?

FR. B. The original Greek word is "*Leitourgountôn*," which means "performing the Liturgy," or, as we should say nowadays, assisting at Mass. What we call the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Greeks call the Liturgy.

MR. W. Really, sir, you cannot expect me to believe that the Apostles said Mass. Why, you will want me to admit that they were Roman Catholics next! Besides, if "ministering to the Lord" does mean "the Liturgy," I think the Church of England Service is called "The Liturgy," and you would not consider that the same as the Mass in your Church.

FR. B. Certainly not. But the Church of England, when she broke off from the Catholic Church, carried with her a great many remnants of the Catholic religion, and in order to make people think the old religion was still preserved, they called their new services by the old names.

MR. W. That is just what we Nonconformists always say—that the Church of England retained many Popish superstitions which we wish to see cut away from it. It was not reformed enough. But let us follow the Apostles. It seems that "the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, desired to hear the Word of God," and when he saw the sorcerer Elymas struck blind "he believed." It does not say whether he was baptized or not.

FR. B. Was it necessary for the sacred writer to repeat an account of the Baptism of each successive convert ?

MR. W. I thought you would say that. But the same is the case all through the Apostle's journey. Paul says to the Jews, "Through this man (Jesus) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins ; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii. 38, 39). You see, sir, justification is by faith, and "all that believe are justified from all things." Now, sir, I have always been told that this is the great difference between your religion and ours. Was it not because of his teaching this saving doctrine of justification by faith that Luther was excommunicated by your Church, and so the blessed Reformation came about ?

FR. B. I think if you knew the real history of what you call the Reformation, you would not give it the name of "blessed." Shall we stop to discuss the subject of Justification, or shall we defer that for the present, and go on with our examination of the accounts of conversions ?

MR. W. Well, perhaps we had better take one subject at a time, though I should very much like to speak about justification. However, we can put it off for the present. I see that at Lystra, when Paul healed a man who had been lame from his youth, the people wanted to do sacrifice to him and Barnabas, and the blessed Apostles were quite horrified at this idolatry. I should have thought that your prelates would

have been rather pleased than otherwise at being so honoured.

FR. B. I am afraid you have a very bad opinion of us. Why, we teach that idolatry is the worst of all sins; that God alone can be worshipped with sacrifice, which cannot be offered to any creature, not even to the Blessed Virgin herself. But look a little further on (Acts xiv. 20-22) we read: "They returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch: confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith; and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained to them priests in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, in whom they believed." You see it was necessary that they should not be left without the Sacraments, and other means of grace, and so the Apostles provided priests in every local Church.

MR. W. My Bible says "elders"; but I suppose you will say that elders, presbyters, and priests are all the same word, and are the same as our ministers.

FR. B. No; I do not think that your ministers would like to be called priests. But all I wished to notice was that the means of grace were provided, and duly ordained clergy appointed to administer them.

MR. W. That was much the same as what our John Wesley did. When he could not persuade the clergy of the Established Church to help him, he formed his converts into classes,



under chosen class-leaders, who looked after them, and thus formed one of the most remarkable features of our Society.

FR. B. But did he ordain them elders?

MR. W. Oh yes! after some time, when the Bishop of London refused to ordain his preachers, Wesley cut the Gordian knot and laid hands on them himself. In 1785, he wrote: "I firmly believe I am a Scriptural *episcopus*, as much as any man in England, or in Europe" (*Life*, p. 222). He called Dr. Coke, Superintendent, but when he went to America, he was soon called a bishop. The Methodist Episcopal Church is one of the largest religious bodies in the United States. Our chief ministers in England are not called bishops, but we hold them to be quite as good without the title.

FR. B. Probably they are quite as much bishops as those who now occupy the old cathedrals which our Catholic forefathers built. But it seems to me that you do believe in some kind of ordained ministry, who shall not only preach, but administer sacraments.

MR. W. Of course we do, though we don't make them into priests.

FR. B. If they knew what the priesthood really is, they would wish for Catholic ordination.

MR. W. Well, I am not sure about that. But it was not to the elders that they commended them, but "to the Lord on whom they believed."

FR. B. You are quite right. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that

build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it" (Psa. cxxvi. 1, 2).

MR. W. Now, sir, I think we may go on to Philippi, and read about the conversion of the jailor.

FR. B. Was he the first who was converted there ?

MR. W. No, not exactly. The first one mentioned is Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

FR. B. Yes ; there is the grace of the Holy Spirit preparing the heart for the reception of the truth. And was she not baptized ?

MR. W. Yes. "And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us" (Acts xvi. 15).

FR. B. Now let us consider the case of the jailor. There was an earthquake, and the prison-doors were thrown open, the jailor was about to kill himself in despair, thinking he would be held accountable for the escape of the prisoners. The Apostle cried out, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here."

MR. W. Yes, sir. "Then he called for a light, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved ?" (vers. 29, 30). There, sir, is the genuine cry of a poor lost sinner yearning for salvation. No forms and ceremonies

will satisfy him. He must have the knowledge of salvation by the remission of his sins. And the blessed Apostle Paul does not send him to a priest for absolution, as I remarked to our friend Mr. Southcote, but said to him just what we Methodists say now to the convicted sinner, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

FR. B. And how does the narrative go on?

MR. W. "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into the house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house" (vers. 32-34).

FR. B. Yes, a most beautiful and instructive history. Here, as elsewhere, the sinner yearning for salvation is instructed sufficiently to be baptized, and it is not till after baptism that we are told that he had the joy and peace in believing which is the blessing that God usually gives to new converts to the faith.

MR. W. But, sir, surely the Scripture points out that "he rejoiced believing." The joy came from his faith, for "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace" (Gal. v. 22).

FR. B. Yes, and nine other fruits besides, which are not so often mentioned by your ministers. There is a faith which precedes justification, but which, however good, does not save, so long as it is alone; and there is "faith which worketh by charity" (Gal. v. 6), or, as our

theologians put it, "faith perfected by charity." You find this distinction made by St. James, where he compares faith alone to a dead body, and charity, or good works, to the spirit, which is the life of the body. "For even as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead" (James ii. 26).

MR. W. Well, sir, I must confess that I have often been puzzled by what seems a contradiction between the two Apostles; and I do not know that I ever heard your explanation of how they can be reconciled before. I must come and have some more talk with you about that. I fear I have taken up a great deal of your time already.

FR. B. Well, to say the truth, I am expecting every minute a young man who wishes to become a Catholic. But I shall always be pleased to see you when you feel inclined to come. In the meantime, let me impress this upon you from what we have been reading in the Acts of the Apostles. In no one case do you find the Apostles urging would-be converts to go on praying until they find the witness of the Spirit within them. In one case, that of Cornelius, that Spirit comes unsought, though not without the proper dispositions being made for His coming. In every other case the person is instructed about Baptism, as the divinely appointed means for obtaining forgiveness of sins.

MR. W. I must look over these passages again at home. Good-night, sir, and many thanks for your kind patience with me.

# CATHOLICS AND NONCONFORMISTS

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BY THE BISHOP OF CLIFTON

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## IV.—“SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES, WHETHER THESE THINGS WERE SO.”

**M**R. WINTER (*entering Father Baker's study*).  
Good evening, sir. You see I have come  
again to trouble you.

FATHER BAKER. I am very glad to see you.  
I was half afraid my quotation from Cardinal  
Newman might have frightened you away. Pray  
sit down.

MR. W. I am not so easily frightened as that.  
I am really anxious to complete our examination  
of the instances of conversion in the Acts of the  
Apostles. We left off at the Jailor of Philippi.  
I was not quite satisfied with your explanation of  
that conversion, and may have some more to say  
about it hereafter. But perhaps we had better go  
on now to the next example. From Philippi the  
Apostle went on to Thessalonica, where St. Paul  
“reasoned with them out of the Scriptures for  
three Sabbath days” (Acts xvii. 2).

FR. B. With whom did he reason ?

MR. W. With the Jews, in the Jewish synagogue there.

FR. B. Yes. It would have been little use quoting the Scriptures to the Greeks, who did not know anything about them. Did the Thessalonian Jews receive the Apostle's teaching?

MR. W. (*reading*). "Some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." It does not say anything about their being baptized, but I suppose you will say that the evangelist did not think it necessary to mention that.

FR. B. I think we get some information about the Thessalonian Christians from St. Paul's Epistles. He wrote two letters to them from Athens, as he heard that there was a severe persecution of the Church at Thessalonica, and he sent Timothy to encourage them.

MR. W. Yes. "The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar," and so on. "But the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea" (Acts xvii. 10).

FR. B. But what does the Epistle to the Thessalonians say about the converts there?

MR. W. The Apostle says: "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thess. i. 5). If I am rightly informed, you Roman Catholics do not hold with assurance.

FR. B. It depends on what you mean by it. If you mean a full and absolute certainty of faith in the things that God has revealed, we insist on that assurance most strongly. But if you mean by assurance that "it is necessary that those who are truly justified, should, without any doubt whatever, determine with themselves that they are justified ; or that no one is absolved from sins and justified, except he who believes for certain that he is absolved and justified," as the Council of Trent puts it, we do not make much of this kind of assurance. If you look at that verse you quoted just now, you will see that your Revised Version says "*Or, fulness,*" which is the word used in our translation. If you compare this verse with your version of Colossians ii. 2, "the full assurance of understanding," and again, "full assurance of hope" (Heb. vi. 11), and "full assurance of faith" (chap. x. 22), you will find that in all cases your Revised Version agrees with ours ; and that the word assurance does not mean certainty of one's own state before God, but certainty of faith, or hope, or knowledge. And hence the Council of Trent says : "As no pious Christian ought to doubt of the mercy of God, of the merits of Christ, or of the virtue and efficacy of the Sacraments ; so any one, when he looks at himself, at his own weakness, and want of proper dispositions, may have fear and dread about his own grace ; since no one can know with the certainty of faith, without any possibility of deception, that he has obtained the grace of God" (*Conc. Trid.*, Sess. vi. c. 9).

MR. W. Well, sir, I am much obliged to you for quoting that passage from the Council of Trent, because it shows how far apart we really are. The great joy of my life is the knowledge that I have, that I am at peace with God through faith in what my Saviour has done for me ; and I would not give up that blessed assurance for all the Sacraments and ceremonies of your Church. But surely, my dear sir, it must be very miserable to live on from day to day in perpetual doubt as to whether you are in the state of grace or not.

FR. B. Does our friend Peter Southcote strike you as a very miserable man ?

MR. W. Not at all. He always seems the same bright cheerful man, with a good word for everybody, and it seems as if his religion was a real comfort to him. And now I think of it, I remember he told me once that "when the priest gave him Absolution, he knew that his sins were forgiven, and felt as if a tremendous load were lifted from his soul." I cannot believe he said that in order to take me in, but I cannot make it square with what you said just now against assurance.

FR. B. Let me ask you a question. Which are you most certain of, that Jesus Christ died to save you, or that you are actually saved ?

MR. W. Blessed be God, I am sure of both. But, if I am to make a distinction, I am more certain that Christ died for me, than I am that I am now in the state of salvation ; because there is no possibility of a doubt about Christ having died for me ; whereas, people have deceived themselves before now as to their own feelings and frames



of mind. For all that, I am not going to let go my confidence in my Blessed Saviour.

FR. B. God forbid that you should ! But I think you see now the difference between what is an absolute certainty of faith, and that which is but a moral certainty, unless we have, what some saints have had, a divine revelation on the subject. For instance, we read in the *Life of St. Rose of Lima* : "There were three things in particular, which she was as sure of obtaining as if she had had a revelation from heaven. First, she never doubted of her salvation ; secondly, of the inviolable friendship of Almighty God for her ; thirdly, of His all-powerful help in the necessities and dangers in which she might have need of His protection " (*Oratorian Life*, p. 115).

MR. W. Why, she must have been a Methodist !

FR. B. I don't think you would say so if I were to read to you about her penances. But I only wanted to show you that the assurance of which you make so much is by no means unknown among Catholics.

MR. W. Well, I am glad of that. But why does your Council of Trent seem, at any rate, to condemn this confident assurance ?

FR. B. What the Council of Trent wishes to condemn is the error of those who taught that unless a man had the same certainty that he is saved that he has of the Articles of the Creed, he had no faith at all. It was never intended to censure that loving confidence in God that is the joy of a good Catholic, and the expression of which you find running through the writings

of the Saints and holy men and women. There is another reason. There are some good people, from a natural composition of physical or spiritual temperament, who never have their souls sufficiently calm to feel the sweet motions of the Spirit of God. John Bunyan, as I daresay you remember, had great sympathy for such, and describes them in his *Pilgrim's Progress* under the titles of Mr. Fearing and Miss Much-afraid. Under the coarse tyranny of Luther, and such as he in the present day, such souls are driven to despair, because they cannot feel what they are told they must feel if they have true faith. The Catholic Church assures such that they need have no misgivings about their faith because of these fears concerning themselves. It is not so much faith as hope that is weak in them. In fact, she does as St. Paul in this Epistle exhorts, "rebuke the unquiet, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, and be patient towards all men" (chap. v. 14).

MR. W. Well, sir, I have sometimes thought that it is possible that some people may be really in the state of salvation without having the blessed consciousness of the Spirit's witness. I have a sister who is very much like Bunyan's Miss Much-afraid. She never can feel sure that she has been properly converted, though she is as good a woman as any I know, and she is always hoping that the next revival will finish the work for her. She has got into "The Slough of Despond," and never seems able to get out of it. It would be a great comfort to me to think that she may be really one of God's children.

FR. B. Poor soul ! I suspect there are a great many like her among you worthy Methodist people, if the truth were known. However, we are forgetting the Thessalonians. I wanted to point out that the Apostle says that he "gives thanks to God without ceasing, because that when you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is indeed the word of God" (1 Thess. ii. 13), and he had said before, "you were made a pattern to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia" (chap. i. 7).

MR. W. Quite so ; but I do not quite see why you insist upon this.

FR. B. Where did the Apostles go after the Jews had obliged them to leave Thessalonica ?

MR. W. (*reading*). "The brethren sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea ; who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed ; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few" (Acts xvii. 12). There, sir, you see the special reason why they were more noble than those of Thessalonica. It was because they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. They would not take even the Apostle's word without testing it by the word of God.

FR. B. And you think they were commended

for not believing the Apostle until they had been assured that it was in accordance with the Scriptures ?

MR. W. Of course ; what else can the words mean ?

FR. B. You think the Berean believers were a higher type than the Thessalonian believers ?

MR. W. It is not what *I* think, but what the word of God expressly declares about them, comparing the one class with the other.

FR. B. But I thought St. Paul told the Thessalonian Christians, that they were a pattern to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaïa.

MR. W. Yes, so he did ; but yet the Bereans were a higher class still.

FR. B. If you look a little closer at the text you will see that the sacred writer is not comparing the Bereans generally with the Thessalonians generally ; but the *Jews* of Berea with the *Jews* of Thessalonica. The Jews of Thessalonica made an uproar, and mobbed the apostles, whereas the Jews of Berea listened respectfully to St. Paul preaching in their synagogue, and diligently examined the passages of the Old Testament Scriptures which he had quoted as proofs of the Messiahship of Jesus Christ, and found that he had quoted them correctly, and that the Christian revelation was supported by the testimony of their own scriptures. Therefore many of them believed, as we are told. So far from it being a special merit to have disbelieved the Apostle until they had tested his word "by the word of God," as you put it ; the Apostle, as we have seen above,

thanks God that the Thessalonians received his word, "not as the word of men, but as it is indeed the word of God." And thus they became a pattern to all that believed in Achaia, including Berea.

MR. W. Well, when one comes to put things together, it is very plain that you have got the better of me here. It was clearly the Jews of Berea that are compared with the Jews of Thessalonica. Yet I have heard that text again and again brought forward as a reason for suspending one's belief in what a preacher may say, even though he were an Apostle, until it is seen to be in accordance with the Holy Scriptures.

FR. B. I am sorry you should put it as a question of my getting the better of you. I thought we were endeavouring to find out the true teaching of the Scriptures. Surely it is the victory of truth that we both desire, not the gaining of a point in an argument.

MR. W. Yes, you are quite right there. Still, if I admit that what you point out is the true meaning of this passage, it seems to me that it deprives it of all its significance for us in the nineteenth century.

FR. B. I think not. It seems to me to have direct bearing on our present conversation. I have laid down the proposition that Conversion in the Acts of the Apostles has always an intimate connection with Sacraments. I cannot exactly say that you imitate the Bereans "in that they received the word with all readiness of mind," because you receive it very unwillingly, in con-

sequence of its being contrary to "the tradition that you have received from your fathers"; but, at any rate, you are "more noble" than those who reject it with scorn, for you are willing to "search the Scriptures daily whether these things are so."

MR. W. I am obliged to you for the good opinion you have of me. But while we are upon the subject of the Thessalonian Christians, whom, as you proved, the Apostle holds up as a pattern, is it not rather remarkable that in neither of his Epistles to them, St. Paul should have so much as mentioned the Sacraments, even that of Baptism?

FR. B. You will find the same omission in many of our most valued spiritual works; for instance, *The Following of Christ*, which your own John Wesley published in a mutilated form. But Baptism is taken for granted as the beginning of the spiritual life of the soul. So St. Paul, in the Epistles to the Thessalonians, includes Baptism and other Sacraments in exhorting them to "stand fast and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or our Epistle" (2 Thess. ii. 14).

MR. W. I am rather alarmed at the quantity of things you would get in under cover of those "traditions." Is not that the same chapter in which he speaks of the "Man of Sin," whom we have been accustomed to understand as a prophecy of the Pope?

FR. B. Exactly. And you will see that it is the steadfast holding of these traditions that is recommended by the Apostle as the sure safeguard against the Man of Sin, or Antichrist.

MR. W. You don't mean to say that you hold that Popish traditions are the surest safeguard against Antichrist?

FR. B. Of course I do, and so does the Apostle, which is more to the point. I see you have a vast quantity of early prejudices to be carted away, as Cardinal Newman would phrase it. But let us go on with our conversions. From Berea St. Paul went to Athens, and preached that wonderful sermon on "The Unknown God" in the Areopagus.

MR. W. Yes, and we are told that "certain men clave to him and believed," Dionysius the Areopagite, Damaris, and others. It does not say anything about their being baptized; I know what you would say.

FR. B. Well, I think at Corinth there were some more conversions.

MR. W. Yes; "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized." I do not know that there is anything here that we have not considered before.

FR. B. Well, you cannot say that there is nothing about Baptism in the Epistle to the Corinthians.

MR. W. No; there is a good deal about it in the First Epistle, at any rate. But it does not appear to me to make so much account of it as you do, for the Apostle says: "I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius . . . for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. i. 14, 17).

FR. B. It is much the same in the Catholic Church now, for a bishop seldom baptizes. That Sacrament is usually administered by simple priests ; and you know that we hold that in case of necessity any one may baptize.

MR. W. Do you mean to say that Nonconformist Baptism is all right ?

FR. B. It is not "all right," but it is valid, if it is administered by pouring water on the head of the person, at the same time saying, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

MR. W. But I thought you baptized over again those who join your Church.

FR. B. We teach that it is sacrilege to baptize over again one who has been once validly baptized. But when Baptism is administered by those who do not believe in its efficacy, they are naturally careless as to the mode of doing it ; and hence, if there is any doubt as to whether all has been done properly, we baptize conditionally, in order to make sure.

MR. W. Then, I suppose, if the person has been validly baptized before, the conditional Baptism goes for nothing ?

FR. B. Exactly so. But to return to St. Paul. It says that the reason why he thanks God that he had baptized hardly any of the Corinthians was, "Lest any should say that you were baptized in my name" (1 Cor. i. 15). He found that they were giving way to party spirit, and saying, "I am of Paul : I am of Apollos : and I of Cephas : and I of Christ."



MR. W. Ah, the last one was the right one, "I am of Christ."

FR. B. He was, if he meant it in the right sense, that Christ cannot be divided. But if he only meant to give himself a name in opposition to the others, he may have been the most conceited and sectarian of them all. But, as to heretical Baptism, in the early days of the Church, some maintained that the Baptism conferred by heretics was no true Baptism; but the Catholic Church condemned their teaching, and later on excommunicated those who held and taught that doctrine.

MR. W. Why, you are much more liberal than our Rector, who tells his people that our baptism is no baptism at all.

FR. B. Your worthy Rector has only his own private judgment to go by, and therefore it is not to be wondered at that he should fall into all kinds of errors. But what do you Wesleyan Methodists teach about Baptism, especially as regards infants?

MR. W. Our Catechism says: "Baptized infants have the outward advantages of the Christian Church, and all the spiritual blessings of the covenant are assured to them for the future when they shall comply with the terms of the gospel" (*Wesleyan Catechism*, No. ii. p. 46).

FR. B. That seems rather vague. It does not say that any actual grace is given to the baptized infant. Is there nothing more about them?

MR. W. Oh yes! It says, "*What is the teaching of the New Testament concerning children as members of the Church?*" It is implied that their

Baptism places them in the same relation to the New Covenant in which infants were placed in the Old by the rite of circumcision. Hence they are spoken of, addressed, and exhorted, as heirs of gospel privileges." Some texts are given to prove this.

FR. B. Are any of them from the Acts of the Apostles ?

MR. W. Yes ; one is Acts ii. 39, " For the promise is unto you, and to your children."

FR. B. I thought we had examined what that " promise " was. It is contained in the preceding verse : " Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Surely the promise was that those who were thus baptized should receive the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. We saw that this was fulfilled in the case of the adults, and is it not cruel to deprive the children of the same promise ?

MR. W. Well, but infants have no sins, and cannot repent, or as you would say, do penance ; and how can they receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ?

FR. B. Do you not believe that we are all born in sin ?

MR. W. Oh yes, our Catechism teaches that we are, and that " the sinfulness of that state is the want of original righteousness, and the depravity of our nature " (*Cat.*, p. 17).

FR. B. Then, is there no way by which infants can be cleansed from that sinfulness ? It

was no fault of theirs that they were born with that "want of righteousness," and why cannot the grace of God deliver them from it without any act on their part? I do not wonder at your feeling the strength of the Baptist argument against Infant Baptism, if you have nothing more definite to say for its benefit than a hesitating hope that it may be as good as Jewish circumcision. Why, surely we "are circumcised in the Circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in Baptism . . . quickened together with Him, forgiving you all offences" (Col. ii. 13).

MR. W. Do you really believe that infants when they are baptized receive the remission of original sin, and the gift of the Holy Ghost?

FR. B. Certainly. Original sin is effaced from their souls, and the Holy Ghost takes up His abode in their hearts.

MR. W. But they cannot exercise faith or repentance.

FR. B. No; they are incapable of human acts until they come to the use of reason.

MR. W. But surely, sir, you cannot help seeing how inclined to evil quite little children show themselves to be.

FR. B. True; but the inclination to evil is not in itself a sin. It is, like death, one of the consequences of original sin; but it is the consent to do it, and the indulgence of it, not the mere having it that is sinful. Parents ought to correct the propensity to evil in children as soon as they perceive it, for they never can know exactly when the child does come to the use of reason, and

when it is capable of committing sin. But it is a terrible thing to regard those poor little innocents as all under the power of the evil one, instead of regarding them as children of God, as little ones that our Lord has blessed, and taken into His own Sacred Arms.

MR. W. Well, sir, I must say that it has always been a great comfort to me to have had my little ones baptized. It was all I could do for them then ; and I did consider it, as our Catechism says, "a privilege and a duty to dedicate them to God in Baptism."

FR. B. I am rejoiced to hear you say so, and only wish you had a more full knowledge of what your little ones have gained by their Baptism. I was reading the other day the *Life of Archbishop Magee*, late Archbishop of York. In one of his letters occurs the following passage :—

"I heard the other day of a mother, who is a Baptist, who is enduring a lifelong suffering of doubt concerning the salvation of two of her children, who died before they were admitted into the Church and baptized ; and who were too young to give 'evidence of assurance.' Thank God, ours is a different creed. W. C. M. Sept. 3, 1858."

MR. W. That is a very striking passage, and I shall bear it in mind next time I get upon the subject with my Baptist friends. But we are getting away from our subject. The next conversion is that of Apollos, who, we are told, "was instructed in the way of the Lord ; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism

of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue : whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (Acts xviii. 25, 26). Do you suppose that he would be baptized again ?

FR. B. Of course. He had not received Christian Baptism at all. But your question is answered more completely by the case of certain disciples at Ephesus. St. Paul "said to them, Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed ? But they said to him, We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost." Now it is worth noticing the way in which the Apostle deals with them. He found them professing to be disciples, and so he recalls to their mind the Baptismal formula, in which the name of the Holy Ghost occurs. "And he said : In what then were you baptized ? Who said : In John's baptism. Then Paul said : John baptized the people with the baptism of penance, saying : That they should believe in Him who was to come after him, that is to say, in Jesus. Having heard these things, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had imposed his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied" (Acts xix. 1-6). I think this completely answers your question about Apollos. But it does more. It shows that converts were not only baptized, but that they received the imposition of hands by which they received the Holy Ghost. We need not suppose that He always manifested His presence, as in this

case, by miraculous gifts : but there was a special reason in this instance, to impress upon these men that the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire of which John the Baptist had spoken was a living reality.

MR. W. The part where I do not quite follow you is where you imply that that Apostolic imposition of hands is the same as your Confirmation now. If I believed that, I should feel bound to join your Church.

FR. B. I think there are a great many other things that you would have to believe before you could be admitted into the Catholic Church.

MR. W. Yes ; your Church seems so different from the Church of the Acts of the Apostles. There all is simplicity, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" ; while with you there is an elaborate system of doctrine and ceremonial to be mastered, before one can be admitted to what you consider the true Church.

FR. B. You forget that these various doctrines and practices are made difficult to you by the fault of your forefathers, who threw them away. In the times of the Apostles there were no separate bodies, each professing to be the purest form of Christianity. It was only a question of Christian or no-Christian. With the Jews there was more difficulty, because they had to unlearn prejudices against Christ and His teaching instilled into them by the Scribes and Pharisees. Though by their knowledge of the Old Testament, and their repudiation of idolatry, they were nearer to Christianity than the Pagans were, yet their national prejudices

were so strong, that they were more difficult to convert. But we left St. Paul at Ephesus. He stayed there more than two years, and all Asia Minor heard of the Gospel. We are told that "God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul, so that even there were brought from his body to the sick, handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the wicked spirits went out of them" (Acts xix. 11, 12). Now, Mr. Winter, tell me honestly, which does this incident sound most like—an incident in the history of the Protestant religion, or the history of the Catholic Church?

MR. W. Well, to say the truth, there does seem to me a smack of Popery in that account. If it had been related in an uninspired history, I should have looked upon it as a piece of superstition to imagine that handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched Paul's body could have any healing power.

FR. B. Thank you for your candour. But does it not show that Popery, as you call it, has more in common with the Acts of the Apostles than the Protestant religion has under any of its various forms?

MR. W. If you mean that your religion is a more old-world religion than ours is, I admit it. But, sir, we are living in the nineteenth century, and very near the end of it too, and we have to adapt religion to the times in which we live, not to bind ourselves to antiquated superstitions.

FR. B. But you were saying a little while ago that the Church of the Acts of the Apostles was

so different from the Catholic Church now. And when you are obliged to acknowledge that in the matter of relics of saints effecting miracles, the Catholic Church alone resembles the Apostolic Church, are you not confuting your own objections ?

MR. W. Well, it does look like it. But I am a plain man, and not clever at argument. You asked me a plain question, and I gave you a plain answer. Perhaps I was rash in making the admission.

FR. B. You could not be wrong in saying the truth. But there is another incident that occurred at Ephesus. Some Jewish exorcists, who tried to expel evil spirits by invoking the name of Jesus, got the worst of the encounter, and fled out of the house naked and wounded. The narrative goes on, "And this thing was known to all the Jews and the Gentiles who dwelt at Ephesus ; and fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many of those who believed came confessing and declaring their deeds. And many of those who had followed curious things brought their books together, and burnt them before all ; and the price of them being computed, they found the money to be fifty thousand pieces of silver" (Acts xix. 17-19).

MR. W. That shows how superstitious the Ephesians were.

FR. B. Yes ; but it shows what a vast difference there was between the superstition of those who practised magic, and the faith of those who were cured by relics that had touched the Apostle.



The fact is the near presence of God, as manifested in miracles, brings men face to face with eternity, and brings their own sins to remembrance; and so numbers of them came to confession.

MR. W. You don't mean to say that you are going to persuade me that St. Paul set up a confessional at Ephesus!

FR. B. Well, exactly the same thing happens now in Catholic countries, when miracles take place in a village, the fear of God comes upon the people, and great numbers go to confession. I suppose the same cause led to the same result in Ephesus.

MR. W. By the by that reminds me of something I should like to ask. You have pointed out several cases, more or less clear, where conversion was connected with Baptism. We have not come across any examples of what you call the Sacrament of Penance, with which our friend Peter Southcote connected his conversion.

FR. B. I am glad you mentioned that, because a case in point happened while St. Paul was at Ephesus.

MR. W. Oh, you mean what you have been telling me about these people confessing their misdeeds, which I should put on the same footing as the kind of confessions that we have at our class-meetings.

FR. B. I mean something quite different. While St. Paul was at Ephesus, he wrote his two Epistles to the Corinthians. In the First Epistle, he tells them that he has been told of one of the faithful who had committed incest with his step-

mother, and he gives orders for his excommunication : "I indeed absent in body, but present in spirit, have already judged, as though I were present, him that hath done this thing. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, you being gathered together and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ ; to deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. v. 3-5).

MR. W. What a terrible sentence ! I don't know that I ever thought about that passage before. Why, it is worse than delivering heretics over to the secular arm to be burned alive ! Is that really the same in my Testament ? Yes ; I see it is just the same there.

FR. B. Yes ; there is no doubt about it : there it is. You must remember that there was no secular arm for the Church to hand over offenders to in those days. Hence the penalties had to be wholly supernatural.

MR. W. Well, I had rather fall into the hands of God than into the hands of man.

FR. B. Yes ; but in this case it was into the hands of Satan. But I called your attention to the subject, in order that you may see how great the power was that was committed to the Church, and how authoritatively St. Paul claimed and exercised it.

MR. W. But he did not leave this unfortunate sinner in the power of the devil all the rest of his life, did he ?

FR. B. No. If you look at the Second Epistle

you will see that he says : " Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears." See the tenderness of the Apostle, even when passing that terrific sentence. And so he goes on : " To him that is such an one this rebuke is sufficient, that is given by many : so that contrariwise you should rather pardon and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." He was evidently satisfied with the report that he had heard of his repentance ; and so he says, " For which cause I beseech you that you would confirm your charity towards him. . . . And to whom you have pardoned anything, I also. For what I have pardoned, if I have pardoned anything, for your sakes have I done it in the person of Christ, that we be not overreached by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his devices " ( 2 Cor. ii. 4-11 ).

MR. W. How does he mean that he pardoned it " in the person of Christ " ?

FR. B. He means that he was acting as Christ's vicegerent. It was thus " with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ " that he excommunicated the offender, and it was with no human power, but by the power of God that he absolved the penitent sinner from his excommunication and from his sins.

MR. W. And do you believe that any one has the same power now ?

FR. B. Certainly I do. The Pope, as the successor of St. Peter, has full power over the whole Church to bind and to loose, by excommunication and absolution.

MR. W. But I thought you priests claimed the power of forgiving sins ?

FR. B. Yes ; we have that power, as far as our jurisdiction extends.

MR. W. How can a priest forgive sins ?

FR. B. By the power of God in pronouncing the words of absolution.

MR. W. Ah yes ; I remember Mr. Southcote quoted the same words from your Catechism ; and I think I said that I would rather get my pardon from my Saviour Himself.

FR. B. No doubt the incestuous Corinthian thought so too ; but it seems that our Saviour did not choose to give it him, until he received it from the Church by the authority of St. Paul communicated to the heads of the Church at Corinth. However, the whole story is a remarkable instance of the exercise of the power of the keys in Apostolic times.

MR. W. I do not think there are any more examples of conversion in the Acts of the Apostles. St. Paul worked miracles, and no doubt made converts at Malta, but we have no details about them. However, I shall read over again all those passages that we have been discussing, and I am much obliged to you for having given me so much of your time.

FR. B. Good evening, Mr. Winter ; it is a pleasure to converse with one so thoroughly in earnest about spiritual things. I hope this will not be our last conversation. Let us both pray for each other that God may enable us to know Him better, and serve Him more faithfully.

# CATHOLICS AND NONCONFORMISTS

—  
BY THE BISHOP OF CLIFTON  
—

V.—JUSTIFICATION AND THE NEW BIRTH.

**M**R. WINTER (*entering Father Baker's study*). Here I am again, sir. You will be very tired of me before we have finished our discussion.

FATHER BAKER. No fear of that. Pray sit down. The subject is too interesting to me, especially with so intelligent an inquirer. Have you thought over those passages of Holy Scripture that we were reading together?

MR. W. Indeed I have; I have read them all through again, and I must confess that, when considered all together, they do give an importance to Baptism that I have not been accustomed to attach to any outward form or ceremony.

FR. B. Do you think our Lord Jesus Christ gave us outward forms without any spiritual power in them, like the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law, which were only a shadow of good things to come?

MR. W. Well, sir, it does not seem likely that He should give us the same "weak and beggarly elements" that profited the Jews so little. And now I think of it, our Catechism does say: "A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given to us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof."

FR. B. Do you mean to say that those words are in your Wesleyan Catechism? Why, they are word for word taken from the Anglican Catechism, which I thought you good folks objected to so strongly in the schools.

MR. W. Here they are, sir, page 45 of our Catechism, No. ii.

FR. B. Why, that is Catholic doctrine!

MR. W. I do not know that I ever heard it preached by one of our ministers, but certainly there it is, the outward sign and the inward grace, and it seems to teach that the inward grace is given to us by means of the outward sign, and that the outward sign is a pledge to assure us that we do actually receive the inward grace. I suppose that would be the sense you would put upon it.

FR. B. It seems to be the sense you put upon the words too, my friend. Surely it is the only sense the words will bear?

MR. W. Perhaps that bit in the Catechism was a little of the old leaven which John Wesley brought out of the Church of England, and had not quite got rid of. At any rate, I cannot make it square with that glorious and saving truth of

Justification by faith. Ah! that was one of the principal things I wanted to speak to you about this evening. Martin Luther rightly called it the test of a standing or a falling Church. I have always heard that your Church condemns Justification by faith; but to me it is the very life and soul of my religion. It is by faith that I am saved: "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. iii. 28). What is your doctrine about Justification?

FR. B. I suppose you would like to know what our Church teaches on the subject, and not the private opinion of an individual?

MR. W. Of course; I want to know what you all believe about it.

FR. B. Well, then, you must have a little patience. It is a subject of the greatest importance, and therefore the devil has tried to insinuate all sorts of errors at every turn of the question. We had better first settle what we mean by Justification.

MR. W. Our Catechism says: "The forgiven penitent is justified, or treated for Christ's sake as if he were righteous."

FR. B. But do you mean that he is only *treated* as if he were righteous, while all the time he is really wicked?

MR. W. No. Our Catechism asks that very question, and the answer is: "He is made inwardly righteous by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, who enables him to do righteousness" (*Cat.*, p. 30).

FR. B. I am very glad to hear that. Justifica-

tion, then, is an act of God by which He makes a sinner just or righteous. It is not a kind of legal fiction, by which a sinner is accounted just while all the time he is really a sinner.

MR. W. As far as my experience goes, a justified man feels himself a sinner still. Even the blessed Apostle Paul called himself the chief of sinners.

FR. B. Yes ; but he did not go on committing sin.

MR. W. Oh no ! He said, "How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein ?"

FR. B. Well, the Council of Trent gives an account of the preparation for Justification, and then describes the way in which God justifies a sinner. I suppose you consider some preparation necessary.

MR. W. Yes ; we teach the necessity of repentance.

FR. B. Do you mean, as some Protestants do, merely a change of mind ?

MR. W. Oh no ! Our Catechism says : "Repentance is true sorrow for sin, with sincere effort to forsake it" (p. 28).

FR. B. Can you repent of yourself, just when you like ?

MR. W. Our Catechism says : "No ; it is the grace of the Holy Spirit which gives the sinner to know and feel that he is a sinner."

FR. B. Well, the Council of Trent says : "The beginning of Justification in adults is by the preventing grace of God through Christ Jesus, that is, by God's calling, and not by any merits existing



in the sinner ; so that those who, by their sins, are turned away from God, by His grace stirring them up and helping them, are led to turn to Him for their Justification, by freely yielding to and working with that same grace. Thus they are so disposed, that by God touching the heart of man by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, the man himself is not inactive, in that he accepts that inspiration, which he has the power of rejecting, and yet without the grace of God he cannot by his own free will move himself towards that justification which is set before him. Hence, in the Holy Scriptures, when it is said, 'Return unto Me, and I will return unto you' (Zech. i. 3), we are admonished of our liberty ; when we reply, 'Convert us, O Lord, to Thee, and we shall be converted' (Lam. v. 21), we confess that the grace of God prevents us."

MR. W. That seems very good doctrine, as far as it goes. But it leaves the poor sinner quite in the dark as to whom he is to look to be saved. It sounds like a doctor examining the symptoms of a patient.

FR. B. Yes ; it is an account of what really takes place, whether the penitent is able to analyze his own symptoms or not. But, as it goes on, I think you will see that the penitent is not left quite in the dark. It says : "Men are disposed to Justification when stirred up and assisted by Divine grace they conceive faith by hearing the word, and are freely moved towards God, believing those things are true which are divinely revealed and promised, and chiefly that truth, that

the ungodly is justified by God through His grace, by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (Rom. iii. 24). Thus, understanding that they are sinners, they are wholesomely made to tremble with fear of God's justice, yet, by the consideration of God's mercy they are lifted up to turn to Him in hope, trusting that God will be favourable to them for Christ's sake. They then begin to love Him as the source of all justice, and hence are moved against sin with a certain hatred and detestation—that is, with that repentance that it is necessary to have before Baptism. Finally, they make up their minds to receive Baptism, to begin a new life, and to keep the commandments of God." This is the preparation for Justification. The time that it takes may be long or short. It may be weeks, or months, or it may be only an hour. It depends upon the quickness of the penitent's correspondence with grace.

MR. W. I see you are supposing the case of a man who has never been baptized. I should like to hear how he is justified in your fashion.

FR. B. There is really only one process of Justification, and it is neither my fashion nor yours. It is God alone who can justify the ungodly. It is a change from the right hand of the Most High. There may be a difference in the means which God uses to effect the Justification itself.

MR. W. Yes, that is really what I meant. We have only heard the preparation as yet, which we should call "repentance and faith."

FR. B. The Council goes on: "Upon this

preparation or disposition follows the Justification itself, which is not merely forgiveness of sins, but the sanctification and renewal of the inner man by his willing receiving of the grace and gifts whereby the man from being unjust becomes just, from an enemy becomes a friend, that he may be 'an heir according to hope of life everlasting' (Tit. iii. 7)" (*Conc. Trid.*, Sess. vi. cc. 5, 6).

MR. W. Why, that is just what we are taught in our Catechism, which says: "Sanctification is the work of grace which purifies the soul from the defilement of sin, and consecrates it to God," and "when our sins are pardoned, and we are born again, we are at the same time sanctified" (p. 31).

FR. B. Very good; John Wesley seems to have kept a good deal of sound Catholic doctrine. It is quite different from Luther's heresy about "imputed righteousness." If I am rightly informed, you believe that it is possible for a man once truly converted to fall away from grace?

MR. W. We do so. We are taught: "Believers may fail to believe and watch, they may cease to be diligent in duty, and thus may lose these blessings for ever" (p. 32). We call such unhappy persons "backsliders."

FR. B. But supposing a man believes just as strongly as ever he did in those things which God has revealed, but has, as you say, "ceased to be diligent in duty," and in fact fallen into deadly sin, is such a one "a backslider"?

MR. W. Certainly; and it is very difficult to renew such again unto repentance. But we

should not say that such a one had "saving faith," though he may still have "general faith" in what God has revealed.

FR. B. But is it not rather puzzling to a poor sinner to tell him that he has only to believe, and his sins will be again forgiven him, when he knows that he does believe all the time? Why, "the devils believe, and tremble." But their faith does not save them, because they have no hope, and no charity. It is not faith alone, but "faith that worketh by charity," that saves.

MR. W. I do not know where to find fault with what you say, but it seems to me as if faith was made of little or no account in your system, while, in the Scriptures, faith is everything. "We conclude that a man is justified by faith," says the Apostle (Rom. iii. 28). "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 5). "Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1). "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Jesus Christ, and not by the works of the law." "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. ii. 16, iii. 24). You see, sir, it is so plain that he who runs can read. What has your Council of Trent got to say to all these texts, and many more that I might bring up to the same effect?

FR. B. The Council gives a direct answer to

that question. It says : " When the Apostle says that man is justified by faith and freely, those words are to be understood in that sense which the perpetual consent of the Catholic Church has held and expressed, viz., that we are said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of man's salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. xi. 6), and to come to the fellowship of His children. And we are said to be justified freely, because none of those things which precede Justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of Justification itself. For 'if by grace, it is not now by works, otherwise grace is no more grace,' as the same Apostle says (Rom. xi. 6) " (*Conc. Trid.*, Sess. vi. c. 8).

MR. W. Well, I am glad to hear that you confess that faith is the foundation and root of all Justification. Then I suppose that faith which you described as preceding Justification is changed by God in the act of Justification into saving faith. Is that it ?

FR. B. We should put it rather differently. The Council says : " The only formal cause of Justification is the justice of God, not by which He is just in Himself, but that by which He makes us just, by which we are gifted by Him, and renewed in the spirit of our minds, and not only accounted, but really called and become just, by receiving into ourselves His justice, each according to our measure, which 'the Holy Ghost divideth to every one according as He will' (1 Cor. xii. 11), and according to the individual disposition and

co-operation of each. . . . In the Justification itself, together with the forgiveness of sins, all these gifts are infused at once, and the man receives through Jesus Christ faith, hope, and charity. For faith, unless hope and charity are added to it, neither unites perfectly with Christ nor makes a man a living member of His Body. For which reason it is most truly said that 'faith without works is dead and profitless' (St. James ii. 17, 20), and 'In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by charity' (Gal. v. 6)" (*Conc. Trid.*, Sess. vi. c. 7).

MR. W. I understand ; and I do not see that it differs very much from what I have been taught. But, when we were discussing the examples of conversion in the New Testament, you made a great point about Baptism. I do not see how it comes in to what you have said about Justification.

FR. B. What I have been reading to you is the account given by the Council of the spiritual work done by the grace of God in the soul of the sinner in the process of Justification. The Council teaches that "the instrumental cause of Justification is the Sacrament of Baptism, which is the Sacrament of faith," as St. Augustine calls it.

MR. W. Ah ! I see. Then you believe that, in the act of receiving Baptism, the penitent sinner receives Justification, the free pardon of all his sins, regeneration or the new birth, and sanctification.

FR. B. Yes, that is quite correct.

MR. W. I wish you could find me some one who has been justified in that way, that I might compare notes with him, and see how far his experience corresponds with my own.

FR. B. I do not know any one here who has been baptized as an adult. Will you be satisfied with the experience of a holy man who died for the faith in the third century—St. Cyprian?

MR. W. I think I have read something about him in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. He was a true believer in Christ, and sealed his faith with his blood. Was he converted and baptized when he was grown up?

FR. B. Yes; and this is the account he gives of it. He writes to a friend, who asked him to tell him about his conversion. He says: "While I was still lying in darkness and gloomy night, wavering hither and thither, tossed about on the foam of this boastful age, and uncertain of my wandering steps, knowing nothing of my real life, and far away from truth and light, I used to regard it as a difficult matter, and especially difficult in respect of my character at that time, that a man should be capable of being born again—a truth which the Divine mercy had announced for my salvation—and that a man quickened to a new life in the laver of saving water should be able to put off what he had previously been; and, though retaining all his bodily structure, should be himself changed in heart and soul. 'How,' said I, 'is such a conversion possible? That there should be a sudden and rapid divestment of all which, either innate in us has hardened in the

corruption of our material nature, or acquired by us has become inveterate by long-accustomed use? These things have become deeply and radically ingrained in us. When does he learn thrift who has been used to liberal banquets and sumptuous feasts? And he who has been glittering in gold and purple, and has been celebrated for his costly attire, when does he reduce himself to ordinary and simple clothing?'"

MR. W. I beg your pardon for interrupting you, but I must say I never heard the difficulties which occur to a man convicted of sin more forcibly put. It is exactly what I said to myself, when the word came home to me, "Ye must be born again." Please go on, sir, I am very much interested.

FR. B. Human nature 1,600 years ago was not very different from what it is now. He proceeds: "These were my frequent thoughts. For as I was myself held in bonds by the innumerable errors of my previous life, from which I did not believe that I could by any possibility be delivered, so I was disposed to acquiesce in my clinging vices; and because I despaired of better things, I used to indulge my sins as if they were actually parts of me, and indigenious to me. But after that, by the help of the water of new birth, the stain of former years had been washed away, and a light from above, serene and pure, had been infused into my reconciled heart; after that, by the agency of the Spirit breathed from heaven, a second birth had restored me to a new man—then, in a wondrous manner, doubtful things at once



began to assure themselves to me, hidden things to be revealed, dark things to be enlightened, what before had seemed difficult began to suggest a means of accomplishment, what had been thought impossible, to be capable of being achieved ; so that I was enabled to acknowledge that what previously, being born of the flesh, had been living in the practice of sins, was of the earth earthly, but had now begun to be of God, and was animated by the Spirit of holiness. You yourself assuredly know and recollect as well as I do what was taken away from us, and what was given to us by that death of evil, and that life of virtue. You yourself know this, without my information. Anything like boasting in one's own praise is hateful, although we cannot boast but only be grateful for what we do not ascribe to man's virtue, but declare to be the gift of God ; so that we sin not now is the beginning of the work of faith, whereas that we sinned before was the result of human error. All our power is of God ; I say, of God. From Him we have life, from Him we have strength ; by power derived and conceived from Him we do, while yet in this world, foreknow the indications of things to come. Only let fear be the keeper of innocence, that the Lord, who of His mercy has shone into our hearts in the access of heavenly grace, may be kept by righteous submissiveness in the hostelry of a grateful mind, that the assurance that we have gained may not beget carelessness, and so the old enemy creep on us again" (Epist. i.). There is a great deal more about

perseverance in grace, renouncing of the world, and the increase in the gifts of the Spirit.

MR. W. I am extremely obliged to you for reading to me the experience of that blessed man of God. I seem to know him now, and shall read about him with fresh interest. Well, he certainly ascribed his new birth to the waters of Baptism, and he was born again without any mistake, for his experience has the stamp of the Spirit of God upon it.

FR. B. Do you know, I once read that passage to a Plymouth Brother, and he said he could not believe it because it was contrary to the Scripture, which says, "You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26). How, then, could Cyprian have been made a child of God by Baptism?

MR. W. I have always found the Plymouth Brethren very narrow-minded; and yet there is something in what he says. May I ask, how did you reply to him?

FR. B. As I generally do, when people quote Scripture against the Catholic Church. I told him to read the next verse.

MR. W. I forget what comes after the verse that he quoted.

FR. B. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

MR. W. Well, certainly you had him there. But, may not the references which St. Cyprian makes to "the saving water" and "the water of new birth" be taken figuratively to mean the "word of God"?

FR. B. When our Lord said, "Unless a man be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (St. John iii. 5), do you think He meant "the word" and not real water?

MR. W. Well, it certainly looks as though real water was meant, but I have seen tracts in which it is explained metaphorically of "the word."

FR. B. When our Lord instituted the Sacrament of Baptism, did He command His Apostles to use water, or only "the word"?

MR. W. Water, certainly, as we have seen all through the Acts of the Apostles. Indeed our Catechism says that the "outward and visible sign or form in Baptism is baptizing with water—by dipping, or pouring, or sprinkling—'into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'"

FR. B. So far, so good. By the way, what does your Catechism teach about "the inward and spiritual grace given unto us" in Baptism?

MR. W. It says: "The inward and spiritual grace signified, is our being cleansed from the guilt and defilement of sin, and receiving a new life from and in Christ Jesus" (*Cat.*, p. 46).

FR. B. Oh! that is not so good. It is not "grace given unto us," but only "grace signified." I do not think that would have helped St. Cyprian much. He had the happy experience of a reality, not a shadow. And the water used in Baptism was real water in the days of the Apostles, and their successors in the third century are hardly

likely to have substituted "the word" for what the Church regarded as a Divine command. Besides, this is not by any means the only mention of regeneration which is given in Baptism in the writings of St. Cyprian. In fact, he speaks of it in the case of infants. Indeed, he is the earliest Christian writer who expressly mentions infant Baptism.

MR. W. Really! I should like to hear what he says about that, if it is not giving you too much trouble.

FR. B. He had occasion to censure the error of some who imagined that Baptism ought to follow the rule of the Jewish circumcision, and not be administered to infants before the eighth day of their birth. He says "that spiritual circumcision ought not to be hindered by carnal circumcision, but that absolutely every man is to be admitted to the grace of Christ." And again: "if even to the greatest sinners, and to those who had sinned much against God, when they subsequently believed, remission of sins is granted—and nobody is hindered from baptism and grace—how much rather ought we to shrink from hindering an infant, who, being lately born, has not sinned, except in that, being born after the flesh according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion of the ancient death at its earliest birth, who approaches the more easily on this account to the reception of the forgiveness of sins—that to him are remitted, not his own sins, but the sins of another. And therefore, dearest brother, this was our opinion in Council, that

by us no one ought to be hindered from Baptism and from the grace of God, who is merciful and kind, and loving to all" (Epist. lviii.).

MR. W. That is valuable testimony that infant Baptism was no new thing in the third century, for the question was not about whether it was lawful, but only about the age when it could be administered. I cannot help seeing that St. Cyprian believed in Baptismal Regeneration both in the case of adults and in the case of infants. This is quite contrary to all my ideas. I always consider that I received the new birth at my conversion, which was to me quite a new life, and a change as from darkness to light, from death to life. But, if I was born again when I was an unconscious infant, it seems to lessen the great gift that I received at my conversion, besides taking away the edge of that most powerful appeal: "Ye must be born again" (St. John iii. 7).

FR. B. Do you remember the words of the father of the prodigal in the parable, "It was fit that we should make merry and be glad: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found"? Surely it was a greater proof of God's loving care for you that He should have borne with you so long, when you never thought of Him, than if you had never been His child before. It would only have deepened your sorrow for sin, if you had known that you ought to have served and loved God ever since your Baptism. Our Missioners, in exhorting sinners to repentance, find it a great help to remind them of the Father whose house they have left, whose gifts

they have squandered on unworthy objects, and yet who is still waiting to give them the kiss of peace and forgiveness. You told me that it was a comfort to you to know that your children had been baptized; but it would surely be a still greater comfort to you if you knew that they are now the children of God, and only need to be taught to recognize and live up to their privileges. And that poor sister of yours, of whom you told me: what a comfort it would be to her to know that, whatever may be her fears and doubts, she was certainly the child of God when she was baptized.

MR. W. Why, sir, you are actually trying to make me believe that what you consider heretical Baptism is what Cyprian calls the "water of regeneration." Why, that would settle me more firmly in my own religion, whereas I thought you Roman Catholics wanted to prove that there is no grace or salvation outside your Church.

FR. B. It is true that "there is no salvation outside the Church," when those words are rightly understood; but it is not true, but a condemned heresy, that there is no grace outside the Church. We want to build up, not to pull down. Cling as fast as you can to every truth that you hold. Bless God with all your heart for every grace that you have received. One truth prepares the way for another. Every grace, gratefully received and co-operated with, draws down a further grace. If you were properly baptized, you were baptized, not into the Wesleyan Methodist sect, not into the Church of England or any national body, but

into the one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, which is alone the Mother of all the children of God.

MR. W. Surely, sir, you cannot persuade me that I am a Catholic, when I know myself to be a sturdy Protestant, and conscientiously believe you and your Church to be in grievous error !

FR. B. I know that, my good friend ; and yet I have hopes of you, for I see you have a real reverence for the Word of God as far as you know of it, and you do not refuse to listen to truths that are unpalatable to you. In this matter of Baptism, I think on reflection you will see that there is much to be said for what I have set before you, and its acceptance will not contravene anything that you know to be true. Even on the doctrine of Justification, where you expected to find such a wide difference, you could not discover anything false in the teaching of the Council of Trent. Examine as closely as you can the real teaching of the Church, and you will find she will stand before you like her Divine Head, and speak in His words : “ Which of you convinceth Me of sin ? and if I speak the truth, why do you not believe Me ? ”

MR. W. Well, sir, I am extremely grateful to you for all the trouble you have taken with me. You have given me many things to think about.

FR. B. And do not forget to pray about them too. Remember our Lord’s promise : “ My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me ; if any man will ” (that is, make up his mind to) “ do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be

of God, or whether I speak of Myself" (St. John vii. 16, 17).

MR. W. Good-night, sir, and please remember me in your prayers.

FR. B. That I will. Good-night ; may God bless our conversation !



# CATHOLICS AND NONCONFORMISTS

BY THE BISHOP OF CLIFTON

## VI.—CATHOLIC WORSHIP.

**M**R. WINTER (*entering Mr. Southcote's parlour*). Good evening, my dear friend. I hope it is not an inconvenient hour?

MR. SOUTHCOTE. Not at all. I am right glad to see you. Come and take this chair by the fire.

MR. W. Well, I have come to talk on the old subject. But first let me thank you for introducing me to your Father Baker. I have seen a good deal of him during the last two months, and have taken a great fancy to him, although he has done one thing for which I could never have forgiven him two months ago.

MR. S. Why, what is that?

MR. W. Why, he has actually made a Papist of my poor sister Lydia.

MR. S. Thank God for that! But tell me, how did it come about?

MR. W. Well, he and I had a good deal of conversation about Conversion, and about Assurance, and Justification, and I told Lydia what he said. Poor soul! she has been for some years in a constant state of worry about her salvation. She never could feel what our minister said she ought to feel if she was truly converted. She was always looking out for some sign that her sins were forgiven, and it never came. Father Baker said a good deal about Baptism and Absolution, and did not seem to make much account of the feeling of Assurance. Somehow his doctrine took hold of poor Lydia, and nothing would satisfy her but she must go and see Father Baker for herself. I tried to persuade her that he could do her no good, and I told our minister. He gave her a scolding, and called Father Baker some hard names, and said the Popish priests are "they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. iii. 6, 7). This put up my back rather. I told the minister that I knew Father Baker, and he did not. I had always found him a straightforward man, who never shirked a difficulty. As for "creeping into houses," I once crept into his, but he had never crept into mine. And I told him plainly that if Lydia thought Father Baker could help her to set her mind at rest, which the minister had never been able to do, I would myself take her to his house.

MR. S. What did he say to that?

MR. W. He got very angry, and said that I was half a Papist myself. Then *I* got angry, and said a good many things which I had better not have said ; and so we parted.

MR. S. And did you really take Miss Winter to see the priest ?

MR. W. I did, though I almost wish I hadn't. But I said I would, so I did. Father Baker was very kind and patient ; he listened to all she had to say, and then he began to speak of the Catholic Church being the one divinely appointed teacher of mankind, "the pillar and ground of the truth." He told my poor sister that though she might be tormented with scruples as long as she lived, yet in the Catholic Church she would have certainty of teaching, and not be tossed about with every wind of doctrine ; that in the Sacraments of the Church she would have grace really poured into her soul, and through the Sacrament of Penance she would have the Precious Blood of Christ applied to her soul, and be assured of the forgiveness of her sins. She seemed to drink his words in like a refreshing draught, and took them home to herself as if they were gospel, and as we came away she said, "He spoke as one having authority, and not as the scribes." I reminded her that those words were spoken of our Lord, but she said, "Didn't He say, 'He that heareth you heareth Me' ?" Well, to make a short story, she went to see the priest a great many times, and at last she came and told me that she had been received into the Church. I felt vexed to think how everybody would say it was all my fault,

but I cannot help being thankful for the happy change that has come over my dear sister. She looks now quite contented and cheerful ; she has lost that anxious, haggard, restless look that used to distress us all ; and, though she is always running off to her church when she can, yet is as diligent as ever she was in her home duties.

MR. S. Thank God for His great goodness to that poor soul ! May He reward you for having acted so kindly towards your sister ! I cannot help expressing the hope that you may see your own way into the Church before very long.

MR. W. I am afraid it will be a long time before you have that satisfaction. It is true that my conversations with Father Baker have made me look at many things in a different light. I used to think you Catholics had no real spiritual life and knew nothing of the blessed work of the Spirit of God upon the soul. I thought your religion consisted entirely in outward observances and a slavish, grovelling subjection to your priests. Now I see how mistaken I was as to that. I see that you have in your books and in the lives of numbers of your people a whole system of teaching for the increase and development of that spiritual life, from which John Wesley and our best writers have picked out most of what is good in their works. I see that as to Conversion, Justification, and Sanctification you have laid down in your Council of Trent a body of doctrine which embraces all that is essential on those matters, while guarding against exaggerations on one side and the other ; and I must confess that

my poor dear sister's happy change has made a great impression on me, though I have but a poor opinion of her sense. But there are a whole lot of questions on which I still think your Church is wrong, and I could never become a Catholic until I am convinced of the truth of everything she teaches.

MR. S. Well, my dear friend, I don't despair of you. But it will take you a long time to fight your way inch by inch into the Church if you are going to dispute over every doctrine as stiffly as you disputed over Conversion and Justification. I suppose Miss Winter did not think it necessary to have every particular doctrine proved to her from the Bible? She seems to have found a shorter way.

MR. W. Yes; she swallowed the whole thing at one gulp. She told me that when she was once satisfied that the Church was an infallible teacher, she was ready to believe without questioning everything that the Church taught. There were lots of things that she knew nothing about. Even now I don't believe she knows anything about Indulgences, or about monks and nuns, and ever so many other things. I asked her one day if she knew what Purgatory was, and she said she didn't, but she believed in it because the Church taught it, and she would ask Father Baker to explain it to her. A few days afterwards she came and told me what it meant, but she believed it just as much before she understood as she does now. It seems to me rather a childish sort of faith.

MR. S. But did not our Lord say, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter into it" ? (St. Mark x. 15).

MR. W. Yes ; but the Apostle Paul says, "Be not children in understanding ; howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men" (1 Cor. xiv. 20). God has given me reason, and I must use it.

MR. S. No doubt—so far as reason can carry you. But when you come to things of revelation, which unaided reason could not find out, then if you do not believe as a little child you will never be able to understand. But, when you have received the revealed truth by faith, you can exercise your reason upon it, and get to understand what you believe. I know I am continually learning more and more about those things that I believe. But if I refused to believe them until I could understand them, I should be "ever learning and never attaining to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. iii. 7).

MR. W. I can see that such must be the case with such truths as the Holy Trinity, and the Incarnation, and Redemption ; but with regard to what may be called minor doctrines, I should have thought one was at liberty to exercise one's reason upon them, and prove all things.

MR. S. Of course there are some things that we believe which we might, or very clever men might, have discovered by their reason. But as there are many who make small use of what little understanding they have got, and would not, ordinarily speaking, have discovered them, Al-

mighty God has been pleased to reveal them, and so put us all on the same footing of faith ; for the simplest child can believe as much as the most learned philosopher. Has it ever occurred to you to ask how it is that a vast body of men such as compose the Catholic Church—men of every variety of intellectual capacity, from a lofty intellect like that of Cardinal Newman to an ignorant child—all believe the same truths with the same unquestioning faith ?

MR. W. Yes ; I have often thought of that. I used to imagine that it was only the poor ignorant people who believed what the priests told them, and I thought that the learned Catholics only pretended to believe for some worldly end. But when I come to know a learned man like Father Baker, I cannot help seeing that he believes all that he teaches as firmly as the poor people whom he looks after. So that won't do. I suppose the real difference between the learned and the ignorant Catholics is that the learned are able to give a reason for their faith, while the ignorant take it on trust, without inquiring into the reasons.

MR. S. Well, that is about it. But the ignorant have a good reason for believing on the authority of the Church, and the learned believe on the same authority.

MR. W. I don't quite see how the ignorant have a good reason for trusting to the authority of the Church.

MR. S. I suppose any man who thinks at all asks himself, Why am I here ? Who made me ?

Why did God make me ? Surely my Creator must have given me some means of knowing Him and what He would have me do to please Him. He must have sent some persons with authority to teach His revelation. There is only one body of men who claim to teach with the same authority as Christ and His apostles. They are one body, holding and teaching, all of them, the same faith ; they have one worship, the same Sacraments, and are all under one head, the Pope. Surely the ignorant man has good reason for being persuaded that this body of men are those to whom he is to look for true doctrine, and the true way to please God here, and to be happy with Him for ever hereafter. I think I remember a passage in one of the prophets which says that the way of salvation "shall be a straight way, so that fools shall not err therein" (Isa. xxxv. 8).

MR. W. What do you think my poor sister said to the class-leader ?

MR. S. But surely she ought not to go to class-meetings now ?

MR. W. So Father Baker said : but that was one of the things she did not understand. So, after she had been received into the Church, she went to the class-meeting as usual. After others had been telling their experience of what the Lord had done for them, it came to Lydia's turn. They expected the usual doleful lamentation about her not being able to read her title clear, and her fears that she was not properly converted. But they were much surprised when she told them that the Lord had been very good



to her, and had given her the forgiveness of her sins and a confident hope of eternal life. They all burst forth into exclamations of "Blessed be God! Glory be to God! The Lord be praised!" and so on. But then they asked her to tell them how it was that she had obtained the happy change. She told them that she had been to Father Baker, and that it was when he had given her absolution that she felt her sins were forgiven. They set up a shout of "No Popery!" and told her she was very wicked to have gone to a Popish priest. How could the absolution of a wicked sinner like him give her any assurance that her sins were forgiven?

MR. S. Well done, Miss Lydia! But what answer did she give?

MR. W. Well, she said, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not. One thing I know that whereas I was blind, now I see" (St. John ix. 25).

MR. S. Again I say, Well done, Miss Lydia! What did the meeting do?

MR. W. I am sorry to say they turned her out of the class, and gave her a lot of abuse, and told her she was now certainly a child of perdition, and had turned aside after Satan.

MR. S. Well, I think she is well out of it. It will make her stick to her religion all the more firmly. At any rate you cannot say that she was unable to give an answer to any one who asked a reason for the faith that is in her. My dear friend, it seems to me that Peter's net is closing all around you, and struggle as you may, you will have to submit yourself at last.

MR. W. It does seem strange that such a sturdy Protestant as I am should have to take the Catholic side, and acknowledge that you folks are right in many things. Still, there is much that I cannot swallow in the Catholic religion. I had the curiosity to go into your church last Sunday, while Mass was going on, and I must say it put me back considerably.

MR. S. How do you mean? Because it was in Latin, I suppose.

MR. W. Not only that. It did not seem to me a reasonable service, as the apostle says our service ought to be. It appeared to me that the congregation had no part in it, and merely looked on while the priest bowed, and opened his hands, and washed them, and then did something with a golden cup, while the bell rang. And then, instead of a communion, as the Lord commanded, he drank it all up himself, and made a sign of the Cross over the people, and so it all ended.

MR. S. Well, I suppose that was all that you could see. But did the congregation really seem as if they took no part in it?

MR. W. What else could they do? It was all in Latin, and so I said to Lydia when I met her as she came out. And it was only just now and then that they could catch a word or two that the priest said. It was very different from our prayer-meetings, where everybody can follow what the person who is praying says.

MR. S. But were the people not praying at all then?

MR. W. Why, that was the strange part of it.

They each seemed to be at their own prayers. There was Madame de Chaumont, who lives at Hurst Villa, with her son and daughter, each with their French Prayer Book; and there was Mr. Baumgarten, the German watchmaker, with his family, and their books were all in German; and Signor Vitelli, the Italian music-master, with his Italian Prayer Book; and my sister Lydia with her English Garden of the Soul; and many people with their beads in their hands and no books at all—all praying away at the same time, and not one of them could hear what the priest was saying at the altar, and the choir seemed to be singing something quite different. It was a strange confusion.

MR. S. But did the people take no account of what the priest was doing?

MR. W. Yes, I must say they did, every now and then. At one time when the bell rang they all knelt down, and then they seemed to pray more earnestly. And then when the bell rang three times a dead silence came over the whole place, and all bent their heads until the bell rang again three times, when they seemed to give a sigh of relief, as though something had been accomplished, and then they began their prayers again. I asked Lydia if she knew what the priest was saying, and she said she had it in her book, but she did not take much account of what he was *saying*—the important thing was what he was *doing*. “Well but,” I said, “you could not even see what he was doing, for he had his back to you, and I noticed that you did not look at him

at all. How could you know what he was doing?"

MR. S. I see Miss Lydia has got hold of the root of the matter. But what did she say to you?

MR. W. She said that she knew very well that the priest was offering up the Lamb of God sacrificed for us, and all her prayers were offered in union with that great sacrifice. Poor dear soul! she said she had been praying very hard for me. At any rate her prayers can't do me any harm, though God may answer them in a way she may not wish.

MR. S. I believe they will be answered as she wishes, in good time. But now tell me, my dear friend, don't you remember Aaron's first sacrifice in the desert?

MR. W. Ah, yes; all the congregation of the children of Israel were there, six hundred thousand men, besides women and children. And when Aaron offered the appointed sacrifice the fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, in token that God had accepted the offering of His chosen people.

MR. S. How many of all that multitude could hear the words with which Aaron offered the sacrifice?

MR. W. Probably not two hundred. But they all knew what he was doing.

MR. S. Exactly so. And what was that sacrifice the type of?

MR. W. Of the great sacrifice on Mount Calvary, by which our eternal redemption was accomplished.

MR. S. And supposing you had been among the crowd on Mount Calvary, and though not near enough to catch the seven words that Jesus spoke on the Cross, yet supposing you knew who He was, and for what He was offering that awful sacrifice, would not you have offered yourself and all your aspirations and wants in union with that great sacrifice, and begged that God would accept them and grant them for His sake ?

MR. W. Of course I should. Indeed, at this distance of 1800 years, I never pray without thinking of it, and pleading that blessed sacrifice.

MR. S. Well, now, cannot you understand how a number of people of different tongues, English, German, French, and Italian, can all be joining in the same sacrifice, although they may not be able to understand each other or to hear a word of what the priest who offers the sacrifice is saying ?

MR. W. Oh yes, I can see that if there was a real sacrifice that would be the way in which people would take part in the sacrifice. But the great sacrifice for sins has been accomplished once for all on Mount Calvary, "for by one offering, He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 14).

MR. S. But we Catholics believe that Christ instituted a sacrifice to be perpetually offered by the Christian priesthood, and that sacrifice of the true Body and Blood of Christ we call the Holy Mass. We show that we believe it by acting in such a way as you admit people would act if there was a real sacrifice. You may think us all wrong

in our belief, but you cannot say that, believing as we do, our worship is not a "reasonable service."

MR. W. Well, I suppose I must admit that you are consistent in your error. I must have a talk with Father Baker about that, for it seems to me an awful insult to the sacrifice on Mount Calvary, as if that were not sufficient to blot out the sins of the whole world. "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Heb. x. 18).

MR. S. Do you think your sins were forgiven before you were converted?

MR. W. No, certainly not.

MR. S. But the sacrifice which atoned for them was offered more than 1800 years before, was it not?

MR. W. Yes, blessed be God!

MR. S. Then that sacrifice did not remit your sins, although it atoned for them before they were committed?

MR. W. Oh, I see what you are driving at. You want to prove that the forgiveness of sins is a special act of Divine grace, besides that great work that was accomplished on the Cross.

MR. S. Exactly so. If an additional act on God's part is required to apply the merits of that sacrifice to your soul, a sacrifice to obtain that grace cannot be any derogation of that sacrifice by which your sins and mine were expiated. But Father Baker will explain it to you much better than I can, and show you the true meaning of those passages of Scripture which seem to

you to be opposed to our doctrine about the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

MR. W. I am always glad to have a talk with Father Baker, in spite of his having carried off my sister to his church. But there are a great many other things which seem to me unscriptural in your Church. Your praying to the Virgin and the Saints appears to me quite contrary to the plain words of Scripture, which says that there is only one Mediator, Jesus Christ.

MR. S. Where does the Bible say that ?

MR. W. Here ; I can soon find the passage. It is in the First Epistle to Timothy, second chapter, and fifth verse : "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." What can be plainer ?

MR. S. I thought you said "there is *only* one Mediator."

MR. W. So I did ; if there is one, there cannot be more than one.

MR. S. I don't quite see that. But how does the passage go on ? Father Baker tells me that he often finds the answer to Protestant objections in the very next verse.

MR. W. The next verse says : "Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

MR. S. Yes ; there you see your answer. There is only "one Mediator who gave Himself a ransom for all." No other mediator could do that. But that does not hinder our having any number of mediators who pray for us, that we may be worthy of the promises of Christ. I

am sure you ask your friends to pray for you sometimes, especially those whom you believe to be living close to God. In that very passage St. Paul is exhorting Timothy to get prayers offered up for all men, particularly for those in authority. He could not have thought that he was interfering with the mediation of Christ. It is only that mediation that renders our poor prayers, and even the prayers of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, of any avail in the sight of God. When you get to understand what the sacrifice of the Mass is, you will see how impossible it is for Catholics to confuse for a moment the adoration which we give to God with the reverence and devotion that we give to our Lady and the Saints.

MR. W. Well, I have come to look at so many things lately in a different light to that in which I used to regard them, that I cannot say but what I may find I have been mistaken about that. I certainly never read that passage in Timothy before in the way in which you read it, and yet when read in connection with the next verse it seems to me that you have got the Scripture on your side more than I thought. But I must be saying good-night, as it is getting late. I am sure you will not forget me in your prayers, though I am such an obstinate heretic.

MR. S. A man that is ready to be convinced as soon as the truth is made plain to him may be in error, but he cannot be a heretic. Good-night, my dear friend, and thank you for your welcome visit, and especially for telling me about your dear sister.







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