

V. Spiritual Life

D. Other Issues of Persons

d. Loss of Faith

231.

Sermon, Book 1, No. 10

Sermon for Sexagesima, 1856

(incomplete)

"And some fell among thorns" (Luke VIII.)

Of the three classes of those who fail to cooperate with the grace that calls them to salvation, mentioned in the parable of the sower, the most numerous is unquestionably the third. The cares, the riches, and the pleasures of this world do more to render sterile in our hearts the seed of Grace, than the carelessness of incredulity, or the weakness of inconstancy. Almost every heart at some period is moved by the Spirit of God to live free from sin, and in view of Eternity; and almost every heart that survives that happy moment, lives to see the wreck of the good resolutions then formed, the pure affections thus cherished, and to feel itself choked up, and clogged with the cares or the pleasures of life!

Hence the Scriptures note as particular sign of God's predilection towards any one, that he is snatched always from life before malice can change his understanding, that is, before worldly views and aims enter into his heart, to distract him from the consideration of death and judgment and eternity, and cause him to serve God, at first with but half a heart, and at last to give all his homage to the world.

Innocence is the ripeness of age; and the early death of baptized persons is not premature, nor a misfortune, but a blessing not only because it liberates the young from the heartaches and excitements of life, but more especially because it renders that salvation secure, which even in the best in[ten]tioned is uncertain while life lasts.

The world has a fearful power over the human heart; its preternatural fascination is capable of drawing the most fervent into the abandonment of their virtuous purposes, and to plunge them, almost unconsciously, into worldliness and sin. You need no proof of this but to call to mind those you have known, young girls coming with fresh piety from the convent[-school], young men leaving the domestic hearth, with protestations of undying devotion to virtue whose fall from virtue, was to you so unexpected and so unaccountable. The power of the world over the heart is appalling; and to weaken its influence in ours, I propose to consider its nature and cause, and to point out, as a fruit of this consideration, its remedy.

We are of a twofold nature and therefore have a twofold order of wants. The wants of the body are felt and therefore are more clamorous than those of the soul, which are only understood. The world satisfies the wants of the body and that is the secret of its influence over our being.

But the wants of the body, if satisfied with just moderation, are legitimate and just. How is't that the world comes to absorb all our thoughts and to chain to itself not only the body which is of it but the soul that is so infinitely above it? Doubtless from two causes. 1. From want of reflection on our part. 2. From the preternatural influence of the great enemy of souls, the devil.

Want of reflection keeps us from seeing how much and wherein our affections are entangled, and the influence of the evil spirit is exerted to hide from us the deformities of the world that would shock our sensibilities or awaken our fears.

I

To a voyager on the ocean there are no means of ascertaining the precise direction and swiftness with which he is moving. Hour after hour and day after day he sees stretched above him the same overarching sky, and around him the same boundless waste of waters. Though conscious of motion, he does not know what current may be drifting him from the course towards [which] his prow is turned, nor can he tell how rapidly or how slowly he is nearing his port. Our interior life, the complex of our hopes, fears, aims, affections, surround[s] our soul like an ocean. However various the object[s] that excite our emotions may [be], our individuality infuses itself into them and tinges them all with its own coloring. The hopes and aspirations that spread like a sky above are our hopes, our aspirations; the succession of desires, affections that toss the soul as the waves toss the sailing vessel receives a character of sameness from the fact that they are our desires and our affections. Hence we are without easy land mark on the sea of life. [It is] Only by intense effort of concentration, by recalling ourselves of the past and putting it by the side of ourselves of the present, that we can see how far and in what direction we have been interiorly drifting. This effort of concentration few men can make. Few men can make it except under the pressure of some sharp trial, under the mental excitement of some crushing affliction. Men usually do not think and reason on the steps they take through life, but dream, and sport with fancies as they float down the current of inclination. Hence we do not perceive changes in ourselves. The woman of the world learns to smile at the notions of modesty in dress, conversation and conduct which she held in girlhood, and yet thinks that in the main her piety is not changed! The man of business has accustomed himself to despise his former scruples in his dealings with others, but still imagines he is not changed. Even the coarse debaucher and drunkard, with marks of sin upon his face and person, still continues to regard himself with the same complacency that he felt when his heart was unpolluted by crime!

Life is a dream, to some a dream of suffering, remorse, trouble, to others a dream of affluence, joy and peace, but still a dream.

Now and then as we are living on, some strain of music heard in days gone by, the sight of little children making their First Communion, of the church in which we

knelt with childhood's fresh sweet fervor, to receive the first time the Bread of Life, recalls vividly to our mind the hopes and desires and views of our former days, and as we contrast these with the cold selfish sensualism of our present we exclaim, "How changed!" But like the man spoken of by St. James, who beholds himself in a glass and straightway forgets which manner of man he is when the vision of the past fades, the consciousness of our changes is lost, and as the chord of memory ceases to vibrate the lesson it taught mingles with the forgotten and unknown.

This consideration, beloved friends, is one well fitted to startle us from that self-complacency with which, dwelling [on] our supposed excellences and ignoring our defects, we continue to take it for granted that we shall be saved. In the great battle between the power of hell and the grace of God for the possession of our soul, we have be[en] losing continually. One by one the walls and defenses, behind which virtue was entrenched in our hearts, have given away and been destroyed. One by one we have given up the practice and fervor of our devotions, by little and little our horror of sin has abated, until at last vice is almost enthroned in our hearts and, indifferent and stupid, [we] flatter ourselves that we have not changed! Once we fled from sin as from the face of a serpent. Now we can pass days and weeks and even years, and sin [being], all the while, loathsome and deformed, enthroned in our hearts.

Once we shuddered at the thought of displeasing God; now with mortal sin, with the curse of God resting upon us, black as midnight, we can laugh and enjoy ourselves and amuse our friends. Once we could have met death, not indeed without a pang, for we were full of many hopes, and generous projects, but without fear of our Judge. Now we fear death, we tremble at the thought of judgment, we dare not face it, we would wish not even to think of it. Yet we think [we] are not changed. Where is the fervor of our First Communion, the unselfishness of our heart offering to God our attention to our religious duties, our reverence for holy things, our love of purity and charity, our hatred and horror of the very semblance of immodesty? They are gone, and therefore we are changed, sadly changed and we knew it not. Thorns and briars have sprung up in our heart, because we did not regard them as thorns and briars, did not advert to this springing up, or take note of their rank growth.

How accursed a thing is the stupid pride that keeps from us a knowledge of ourselves! that holds us up in our own estimation when we have lost the respect of God, angels, and men; that makes us torture our ingenuity to find the vices we have not, and hide from our eyes the vices we have. How humiliating to see the thief boasting that he is no drunkard, the drunkard that he is no thief, the hard-hearted that he is not unjust, and the extortioner and cheat reading with flushed brow his name on ostentatious subscription lists of popular charities! Would [that] God might give to us the power to see ourselves not as others see us but as He sees us. The world could never choke the seed of grace in our souls. We should then see this life as a fleeting

shadow, a short dream, and beyond, eternity stretching endlessly before us with, in the foreground, a throne of judgment having on the right a region of light and joy, on the left an abyss of darkness or woe, and the world would have no fascination for us.

II

And why should we have cares and anxieties for the world? Why should we love the world? If we but regard it with unbiased judgment, even its exterior can scarcely be called bright. It is full of wrong and oppression. Injustice triumphs in it, and innocence bows its head in submission. Disease, poverty, death hold sway in it, and its joy is but the hollow laugh of the maniac, without motive or sense. Its riches are burthensome to the heart; its honors are but a gaudy pageant, unworthily bestowed; its pleasures but mocking of joy. Its promises are full of guile, its friendships founded on interest or caprice, without truth or generosity, its joys unsatisfying to the heart. What is there to love in the world? Is it its poverty, its corruption, its broken hearts and crushed hopes? or its wars, its feuds.

The manuscript stops in mid-page, apparently never completed. This section would have discussed "the preternatural influence" of the devil.

232.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, May 29, 1858 (2)

The Foot of the Hill.

There is a city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid; which was built and walled and adorned for the dwelling place of man while his life lasts; which is the preparatory residence and the type of that eternal city whence the inhabitants go no more out, and whereof the Light, Life and Governor is the Lamb who was slain. In this city there are many mansions; there is room and convenience for every variety of taste, disposition, education, habit and desire. It is the only government under the wide stretching heavens that can claim, with any truth, to give to its subjects *in dubiis libertatem*: it is the only government which with invariable stability unites entire pliancy to the real wants of men.

Being such, it is the one safe and proper residence for all sorts and conditions of men. Entering by the gate of Holy Baptism, they may dwell there in content and security, being sure, if loyal citizens, to receive a passport, unquestionable and efficient, for the better and everlasting country.

Deliberately to renounce one's rights of citizenship here; deliberately to go out of this city; to turn one's back upon its walls and to descend the hill, is to seek one's own destruction. To leap from this eminence is the suicide of the soul. No matter by what gate the issue be effected, that of irreverence, disobedience, spiritual pride or self

indulgence, the result is ever the same. To go out is to descend: the city encircles the whole brow of the hill; the first step outward is the first step downward. Choose what path you will; follow what direction pleases you, you must end in the one way; creep or rush headlong; wander about or march steadily, yet there is a place where all the paths shall come together, an ominous *compitum* or meeting of the ways in the great, hopeless marsh of error, wherein every struggle sinks you deeper: where the mephitic miasmas of infidelity choke, sicken and blind you, where the lurid, deceiving witch-lights that flit over the bog-pits, feed their flames from the deeps of hell.

The first pain experienced by the willful exile, is loss of companionship. No matter how many start together, they must from the nature of things, soon separate. They have left behind them the talisman of unity and cannot keep together. So they get independence which they earnestly prayed for, and so they get unlimited exercise of private judgment and peace, comfort or repose in neither of them. The next difficulty is absence of light. It was the princes of that city who were the light of the world, and the wanderer has forsaken that: so, the path grows indistinct, and he gropes about uncertainly: and in the gloom the proposed *object* is lost. As unbroken hounds take every rabbit, cat or mountain goat for the stag which they set out to chase; so these deserters lose all sense of the identity of their original object. Their vision has a quality the opposite to that of the kaleidoscope, it does not give to one object the appearance of many, but makes many and various objects look for the moment like the one first sought; so they chase these phantasms one after another, to meet with disappointment in each; but to rush on in hot haste after the next, with an energetic blindness and persistent idiotic strength which produces infinite laughter in the observing infidel man, but consummate pity in the heart of the Catholic.

The truth of these remarks is annually proven, with a painful clearness, by the record of the so-called "Religious Anniversaries" which take place in New York every May. We have been particularly struck with the precepts and practice of the anti-slavery people, Abolitionists, or by whatever other name those are known, whose sole idea of sin is conveyed in the word slavery, whose universal panacea and restorer of righteousness is the overthrow of that institution. Heaven only knows from what offshoot of error they are an offshoot, but the luxuriance of their weed growth is so offensively rank, as to claim particular notice. They are apparently nearer the *foot* of the hill than the other queer societies. They are the offspring of some one or ones, who unsatisfied with the wisdom of the Church in this matter, went out of the holy city and commenced this sect or whatever it is. *Ce' nest que le premier pas qui coute*, the rest of the decent is rapid enough. They soon added to their disobedience, spiritual pride, self will, private judgment, right of opinion, human progress, and whatever else serves these unfortunates as feet whereon they may, with centipede celerity, run to the devil. By the swift use of these they have gone fast and far. First they attacked human

authority, it was sin to be emperor, or king, or prince; but republicanism or democracy suited them no better. They have this year talked and caused to be printed the most treasonable and frantic attacks upon this country, its rulers, its states, courts, judges, legislatures, mayors; nay, even aldermen. For awhile they held on by the religious sects; but they have thrown them over one by one; at their last meeting denouncing an unhappy Cameronian minister because he would not let a woman splutter blasphemy from his pulpit. The Bible followed the sects and God the Bible; both were openly mocked and denied by men and women publicly in New York city this month.

Self-robb'd thus of every support, what was poor rampant abolitionism to do? Feeling that it was not good to be alone; it sought for help where alone it could find it in the Freeloze associations, the Woman's Rights Conventions and Circles of Reason. Thus we beheld them a couple of weeks ago, mingling with their abolition tirades, furious attacks upon every form of religion, upon the Sacred Scriptures and the Deity, together with shameless iniquities uttered by both men and women on the rights to "choice of maternity" and by whatever other name they may choose to call child-murder. For this is getting to be the commonest sin now; and many and successful are the recent inventions of hell for the perpetuation of the worship of Moloch.* Thus far have these people gone, and there in the sun-light, before all men's eyes, they wallow amid putrid effluvia, in the glutinous mud of revolting indecency,--surely this is the foot of the hill, so far at least as this life is concerned. Yet who will take warning by them in time?--who will believe that this is a natural consequence of leaving the Church. All do not go so far, but all may. The treasury of grace is in that city wherein they dwell not; and out of which there is no safety.

* Attention to this awful, yet very common crime has been forced upon the Catholic press. The "Dublin Review" leads off in a strong article in the number for April.

233.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, April 22, 1854 (1)

The Broad Road.

Digby has written a beautiful work, called "The Meeting of the Ways in the Catholic Church," in which he shows that whoever imbibes the spirit of all that is ennobling in art, or science, or poetry, or other human pursuit, will infallibly come to the Catholic Church.

Natural enough. All "the ways" that reason approves, meet in the Catholic Church, as streamlets in their fountain. But there is another "meeting of ways," from the consideration of which the earnest Catholic may gather instruction and consolation, finding in it an explanation of the existence of the multitudes of those who war against

the Church.

It is nothing wonderful that there are so many anti-Catholics. It is wonderful there are not more. For if all the ways of reason meet in the Church, all the ways of passion scatter away from it. Hence there are as many modes of being anti-Catholic, as there are passions and vices.

To be a practical Catholic, a man must love *all* virtue; to be a bad anti-Catholic, he need have but *one* vice. To be of the children of the Church, he must believe *all* the creed, practice *all* the ten commandments; to be an anti-Catholic, he need deny but one article, or break the least commandment, *virtus ex integra causa vitium ex uno defectu*. There are Greek heretics, who deny but two articles of faith; and there are successive grades of denialists, down to the Universalists and Deists, who deny everything. There are enemies of the Church who have but one of the seven capital sins; and from such there are grades of transgressors down to those who deify crime, and glory in the name of felon.

If the Church is the path leading to paradise, that path is indeed "narrow;" and the vices opposed to each virtue--to faith, hope, charity, temperance, fortitude, prudence, and the rest--the transgression, in thought, word, and deed, against each commandment--the errors opposed to each proposition of the creed, are by-paths leading to the camp of her enemies. If the Church is the ark prepared by the cross for the elect of a shipwrecked world, every one of the capital sins is a wave that carries off her passengers into the wide waste of waters--every phase of heresy is a wind that sweeps away those who have been gathered into her, back again into the destroying flood. Every man who lives in even one deliberate sin, is an incipient anti-Catholic, and needs but the pressure of circumstances to be consummated. We can find enemies of the Church without going to history, who have become so from one sin, and a proud refusal to repent of it--some from drunkenness; some from avarice; some from impurity, driving to mixed marriages and apostacy; some from a desire of popularity with the crowd; some from political ambition. There is a terrible "meeting of the ways" of passion in the great Babylon of the anti-Catholic king. The ways of ignorance and prejudice, too, meet there. In a word, as all that ennobles man tends to the Church, so all that in ignorance or passion debases him, leads away from it. "*Virtus ex integra causa vitium ex singulo defectu*." No wonder that the enemies of the Church are so many, then--great wonder that they are so few. "The way is broad that leads to death."

234.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, June 17, 1876 (2)

[Ceding Christ's Gifts for "Peace"]

A characteristic of human nature which affords satirists much occupation is the willingness of every one to bear his neighbor's ills patiently, and to be free-hearted in disposing of other people's goods. From the coachman who kindly gives his friend a lift in his master's carriage and the cook who obligingly helps some poor widow to her employer's tea and sugar, to the statesman and ruler who votes aid out of public money and gives salaried offices to persons too shiftless to make a living any other way, there is a countless variety of charitable people ready to do every sort of kindness at their neighbor's expense. But the meanest and guiltiest of all liberals are those baptized Catholics who are willing to yield up the gifts of Christ's redemption to make peace with the ones who find the pope and the priests too exacting; who think there is no use in thinking of God so much; who do not see why children might not as well be sent to public schools as not; who for peace's sake are ready to give up going to Confession and Communion, and to concede that the Holy Ghost rather exaggerated when He said, by the Apostle, that there is no other way of salvation, but that established by Jesus Christ.

The Church, her doctrines and ceremonies, is not of our creation and in no sense our property. She belongs in every way simply and solely to the Son of God. She is a city "not built with hands," and those who dwell in that city find there protection and peace, but not ownership. She is the Ark borne above the waves of time, in which all are saved that shall be saved, but of which no passenger ever becomes an owner. What would be thought of a man finding refuge from robbers and murderers in another's house, who would begin to seize upon the furniture and valuables of that house and dispose of them for his private benefit?

235.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, March 20, 1875

Prodigal Sons.

Independence is what the poor prodigal wanted. "Give me my share of the property," he said to his father, "I want to live my own way." That is what the men of the XVI. Century wanted. Luther had all the freedom to study and preach he wanted; but he asked for more. "Let me take my priestly character, my learning, the position I have acquired, and the knowledge of virtue which monastic discipline has furnished me, and go, to a far country where I can spend them riotously." He went, wasted them, and returned no more.

Henry VIII. had a good Queen, a peaceful kingdom, faithful subjects, an

honorable name among European potentates. He must take them into a far country. He did not want a queen for her goodness, but for her power to gratify his passions. He did not want faithful service, unless fidelity would cleave to him and abandon God. He took his gifts into the far country of schism and heresy and spent them living riotously.

The young Catholic, in our country, often yields to the same temptation. He grows weary of discipline and regularity, weary of asking and receiving direction from his confessor, and so carries off the heritage of his Baptism, Confirmation, Communion, spiritual instructions, into the far country of worldly indifference, vanity, pride and wantonness, and spends them--living riotously. At his first step in the "far country" sanctifying grace is squandered. Then one by one thoughts of eternity and purposes not to be lost forever, habits of prayer, and little devotions go away. Then faith dies out; and the lips that once pressed the life-giving Sacrament become familiar with blasphemy and scoffing. After that perish the goods of nature, the honorable name, the robust health, the youthful comeliness. But the passions that were fed by riotous living, though callous, are still craving. The thirst for drink burns when drink no longer exhilarates, the lust outlives its own excitement, the mockery and the blasphemy pour out of the mouth, when the heart has grown weary of them. The apostate from innocence and piety and faith becomes a keeper of swine--feeds passions with pleasures that no longer thrill him--and feels all the time, "I perish with hunger." Independence is a delusion. "No man can serve two masters," but every man *must serve one*.

236.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, April 10, 1875 (5)

[Indifference to Eternal Things]

Indifference to eternal things is the great cause of ruin to the souls of Catholics. It is in our power to become accustomed so to disregard our own convictions as almost to forget what they are. Passion is a kind of delirium. It sharpens our wits to invest means for gratifying it, but blunts them to the perception of all besides. What genius is displayed in this country by people who trade life for money! What admirable wit and dexterity politicians show in cutting one another's throats! But then these fortune hunters know nothing else, and the politicians have no eyes to see what is not in their line. To them, truth, justice, conscience, religion, eternity, are merchantable commodities and cards to play for success in their career. But they cannot see that their career itself is failure, and success in it, disaster.

Train children to this indifference, and you invite them to lose their souls. Give them to understand that religion is no part of daily life, and they will learn the lesson to their ruin, with terrible facility.

237 - Private vs. Religious Interests

A mind that is never occupied with thoughts of God, of the cross, of Mary and the Saints, that has no interest in the most Blessed Sacrament, or the house of its dwelling, cannot remain faithfully Catholic. The commune is the fruit of godless education.

237.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, August 19, 1876 (2)

[Private vs. Religious Interests.]

Where a Catholic begins to look upon his private interests as distinct from the interests of religion a great evil has come upon him. His faith is nearly dead. When he begins to regard the time and money he spends on the support of religion as so much subtracted from his income and his happiness, he has made a great step downward. Then he regards his pastor as a burthen, and the decency of divine worship as a necessary evil. He does not count up "how much can I contribute?"--but "how little can I get off with?" He looks upon every collection proposed for any pious or charitable purpose as a species of black-mail, and is on the watch against the authority proposing it, as against a pick-pocket or burglar. He forgets that the priest, considered with a worldly judgment, is an educated man, fully equal to himself, who gives his time, talents, labors, social life, to religion, asking for himself only bread and clothing, befitting the chief of his people, such as will set forth their appreciation of their own value in a mixed community. When the pastor asks the people to aid him in any Catholic enterprise, he does not beg for his own advantage. He simply gives them an opportunity to gain merit before God. It is becoming his profession, of course, to interest himself in works of piety and mercy; but it is also becoming of the profession of all who pretend to be Christians to do the same. It sometimes happens that Catholics reach that state of mind, in which they are on the alert not to aid the Church, but to speculate off from it. They argue that if there is any profit going from building or maintaining schools and orphans, they ought to have their share of it. These are the material out of which communists are easily made. What faith they have, is dead. And in the Day of Judgment they have had none.

238.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, August 15, 1878 (3)

[The Murphy Movement]

We have frequently alluded to the action of some persons calling themselves Catholics, in joining the Murphy movement. As a sensation, it may be well enough for all those whose only idea of religion is sensationalism or momentary excitement under

the influence of the "spirit." The mere taking of a pledge to abstain from intoxicating beverages is of itself harmless and sometimes most commendable, but when heretical hymns, sentimental songs and prayers are used and services conducted as by any Protestant sect, the presence of Catholics or their encouragement in any way cannot be considered in the spirit of their faith and those who do it lay themselves open to the commission of grievous sin. Invariably these Catholics, who engage in this Murphy movement and profess their former guilty and reprobate life, led that life of a broken down drunkard because they heeded not the voice of their pastor, they neglected their duties, they avoided the confessional, and only because fashion in the world made Murphyism attractive they fell into the spirit of sensationalism, and not that of faith and the love of an immortal soul. To go out of the Catholic Church for any good to body or soul is an act of apostasy. To join the Murphy sensational movement because good is expected to result is equivalent to saying that "I cannot as a Catholic find in the Church the means of leading a Christian life." Let such persons go, if they think so little of that faith which overcomes the world. A movement towards the tribunal of Penance cannot be compared in its results to such as the Murphy movement, and if all would live up to the salutary advice given in the confessional, Catholics would not have occasion to regret the fall of any of their number through the temptation of intoxicating drink. The making of speeches, singing of hymns and rehearsing of experiences may do to excite the feelings and make a momentary impression, but to be moral requires a firm foundation to rest the spiritual edifice upon.

239.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, January 31, 1878 (4)

[Destroyer of Faith]

Uncleanness of life is a frightful destroyer of faith. St. Paul sets this forth in the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, and the experience of ages illustrates it. The soul should have a throne in the body, not be trampled in the mire. But when lust carries the soul captive and employs its light powers to compass vile ends, all order is subverted, all love for what is pure is plucked out of the heart. Luther began with scrupulous fear of God's judgment, but was dragged down by carnal passions, until all things, human and divine, became to him matters of ribaldry and scoffing. The unbelief of England, the atheism of France, were the legitimate offspring of the licentiousness that rioted in the courts of those nations. The contempt for God and what belongs to Him, so widespread among us, is it not an outgrowth of a corruption that every day pushes itself more brazenly into the light?

240.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, Sept. 18, 1875 (1)

[Fallen-away Catholics]

It is not with any feeling of alarm about the future of the Church that we recognize the fact of so many "fallen-away" Catholics throughout the state and all over the West. Irish, German, French and American, all the same, are to be met with in every village and settlement, who were baptized, perhaps confirmed, but no longer prize their faith or have any hope beyond that of the unbelieving world. Absorbed in the care of providing for a life which is not worth living, they give no thought to the priceless dignity they inherited in Baptism, and, by degrees, become as Protestant as if they have been brought up in heresy or infidelity. This is a fact which we know with pain. Not only infidels and unbelievers are perishing around us, but Catholics are swelling their ranks by ceasing to guard the treasure of their faith by faithful good works.

With some the evil is mixed marriages; with others it is bad example of parents and associates; with others ambition for popular distinction, which is shut off from any one deserving the name of Catholic. But with the most, it is simply the spirit of the world--forgetfulness of eternity and absorption of mind in the interests of the body. In this the Catholic Church is unique in the world. She represents a vast positive system; the whole design of the Son of God in His Incarnation. The countless phases of Protestantism are simply negative. They are of the world and whatever drifts downward aids to swell their volume. Catholicity gains in each soul that becomes more humble, more believing, more charitable, more pure, more like the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Every immoral priest, every dishonest layman, every calumnious apostate, is a new foe to Catholicity and an ally of those who "protest" against it. Victor Emmanuel, Garibaldi, Loyson, Edith O'Gorman, Gerdeman and the Stabee of Garcia Moreno, are all under the same banner and alike bring comforts to the soul of the Evangelical alliance. All that is rebellious against God, all that is sensual, blasphemous, malignant and diabolical is, in its way, a protest against the Catholic Church. They constitute what Our Lord designates under the name of the "Gates of Hell." Whatever comes from those gloomy portals--Satanic wrath, envy and activity--and whatever assimilates to it--ignorance, pride, impurity and malignity--are in alliance against the Catholic Church. But they "shall not prevail against her."

241.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, Oct. 30, 1875 (2)

Ironton and the Upper Towns--Confirmation

The number of Catholics fallen away from the faith is a striking feature of the upper Ohio border towns. Burkes, Duggans, O'Neils, Damarius, Douriers, Schmidts, Weigarts, Whites, Carrolls are found there who know nothing of their Catholic ancestry, and have no ambition but to swim with the current and make money and popularity, as if they had no souls and expected no judgment.

It is, of course, fair to say of them, as of other apostates, that they lost their faith through their own fault, and are themselves the authors of their own destruction. But there may be instruction in considering the process by which their apostasy was brought about. Counterfeit and scandalous ecclesiastics have had their share in working this ruin. The Ohio River was for a long time the great thoroughfare from the eastern seaports to the west and south, and so there was the pest of vagabond and suspended ecclesiastics collecting in the villages and giving scandal on the boats for many years.

Besides these there were some not bad but injudicious clergymen, who having undertaken large enterprises, considered themselves bound to assume a suppliant attitude before the people, and thereby gave occasion to many uninstructed Catholics, and prejudiced non-Catholics, to consider themselves the owners of the faith they aided.

But want of Catholic education and mixed marriages have been the chief instruments of Satan in turning away so many from their faith.

We do not lay blame at any one's door for this want of Catholic education, but adduce it as an historical fact to account for another fact. Children were taught their prayers and catechism at odd and out of the way times, and warned not to lose time in it, to the forfeit of rank in other studies. They were forced to the point of knowing enough to receive Confirmation and First Communion, by having the hope held out to them that after those Sacraments were received they would be freed from the irksome study of pious books. So they entered life amongst those to whom Communion and God's grace and judgment and eternity were a dream or a mockery. A few Communions after, and they drifted away on the current of the popular thought and their selfish fancies, amid which they lived and were known no more as Catholics. By not very slow degrees they learned to look upon Catholicity as the "sect" to which the accident of parentage attached them, and to think themselves fulfilling all their duty by not considering it any more than the Methodist or Baptist or Presbyterian or what-not.

Then, mixed marriages, which the "Catholic Church has always held in detestation," have had their share (perhaps the largest one) in this work of spiritual

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ruin. Many Catholics marry non-Catholics of whose ultimate conversion they entertain no hope, and such are false to their faith from the outset.

Naturally their indifference to their faith goes on increasing by the influence of non-Catholic surroundings, and by the time they have children to be taught, they have almost forgotten what to teach them. How can they impress upon those tender minds the continual remembrance of Jesus Christ crucified?

Let us hope for a diminution of this plague of mixed marriages and this irreligious training of children in the future. Our faith is divine and is the only thing we have worth living for. The world hates it, but its author has overcome the world.

242.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, August 8, 1878 (2)

[More Apostates in the Making]

That there are numerous apostates from the Church along the Ohio River is indubitable. In many places there, they are preparing for a more abundant crop of them by neglecting to send their children to Catholic schools. It is bad enough to neglect the practice; but to adopt the theory that there is no use in Catholic schools is sheer apostasy.

243.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, August 3, 1861

Dead Faith.

It is wonderful to notice to what an extent human nature can know a truth and ignore it, at the same time. Naturally there should be no distinction between a hearer and a doer of the law; but there is one wide as infinity. A man may know all the commandments of God, may acknowledge his obligation and interest to keep them, yet fulfill no one of them, and think himself all the time a good and estimable person. Faith can become inoperative, dead in the soul by being disregarded, in the action: and perhaps few of us have not a sepulchre for it within us. We accustom ourselves to hear its teachings, as a matter of form, so soon as we cease for a moment to apply them to our conduct; and by degrees the most awful truths of the Gospel, are but as sounding brass to our ears. Take, for instance, the great truth which lies at the basis of human destiny and duty, that all things of time are valuable only as means to secure eternal life--who does not believe it?--yet who pierces into its core, sees its meaning, and regulates his plans, aims, affections, labors accordingly? We do not ask who of the godless infidel world[,] the great mass of men that are floating on the tide of their own passions through an aimless life: but who of those thinking themselves Christians?

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Go among the men of literature and science. See them struggling, toiling, panting with eagerness to enlighten men. Do they think that all is worthless that perishes with time? Why, yes, they hold the theory: but to them as they study, discover, argue, write and publish the theory is a dead truth.

Observe the men of state, of deep thought, large views, tireless action. They hold that everything earthly--including the dynasties their subtlety is building up, and the fame and power their craft is grasping--is worthless because perishable, and say so every Sunday in their prayers. Then what means the flush of triumph on the brow of him who has just reached the seat of power?--and why does that defeated aspirant go into his private study and grieve? Do men triumph or weep over what is worthless? So through all classes of men there appears the same contradiction--the lips speaking God's creed and the heart acting the devil's. The world is full of envy and hate and strife, of hopes, longings, disappointments, anguish--and every stir in this troubled sea of human emotion, is caused by things of time--things worthless because perishable.

Nor can you or I, worthy reader, use our observation of this fact to feed our cynicism. As we walk among these living tombs of faith, we must not forget that many a truth we believe lies dead within ourselves. Have we ever done one thing for God--chosen a vocation, for instance, or resisted a great temptation, or something of the kind? That is one cord cut that binds our heart to the earth. But how many yet remain! What are our cares, sorrows, mortifications but the pressure of the thongs that tie us down, as they chafe into our hearts' core? We have but to humble ourselves and pray, to work with fear and trembling and wait on God's mercy--for if He take account of inequities who shall abide it?

244.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, Sept. 11, 1875 (3)

The Foolishness of Catholics not Practicing Their Religion

Frequently we overhear persons remark that, although they do not practice their religion, they are still Catholics, or in other words they are what are called "Hickory Catholics." Did those parties ever consider that professing to be Catholics, and not practical ones, implies a contradiction? They seem to think that there are two sorts of Catholicity, the one theoretical, the other practical. The question is not a very subtle one and its absurdity will show itself by merely placing in juxtaposition the two phrases "I am a Catholic," "but I am not a practical Catholic." What do these two propositions mean? Let us consider. "I am a Catholic" means that with the greatest certainty which I can possibly conceive, the certainly of divine faith, I am persuaded that Almighty God has imposed certain obligations upon me. "I am not a practical Catholic" means that notwithstanding the certainty of those obligations, I consider it lawful for me not to

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obey the commands of God, or at least that I may be indifferent about them. To hold that those obligations exist, and at the same time to be indifferent about them, is most the same as to consider the commands of Almighty God as not binding, which would be in direct contradiction to His wisdom in revealing them.

But the Catholic who does not practice his religion does Him a greater injury than he would have done by professing some other creed. He scornfully repudiates the idea of joining in the worship of any outside of the Church, and will not honor Him according to the form of his own religion. Consequently, like the brute, he does not pay Him at all that worship which is due to Him.

245.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, August 8, 1878 (3)

[Non-practicing Catholics]

"He that gathereth not with me scattereth." This is a short way of expressing the condition of those Catholics who hold their faith but neglect the practice of it. They are not under the banner of Christ. They do not convert souls, but prevent them. They make unbelievers think that religion, eternity, death, judgment, heaven and hell are only sentimentalities. Those people who say that Catholic schools are useless, had better express their logical belief and say, "The Catholic Religion is useless." They are stumbling blocks to the young people, and to upright unbelievers. "It were better for them that they had never been born."

246.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, Oct. 16, 1875 (1)

Some Plain Truths

The Catholics of Columbus city and Diocese are not unique to their faith. But it is not to be denied that they are indifferent to many matters that concern the honor of their faith most intimately.

Why should not Catholics take an interest in Catholic affairs? Many of them do not seek for Catholic news, do not interest themselves in the Church at home or throughout the world, do not know what Catholic enterprises are afoot in their midst, and think they do enough for religion by subscribing something because solicited. This indifference particularly infects those whom God has blessed with prosperity, in this mixed community. They are Catholics. But their chief aim is to make their Catholicity aid, or, at least, not hurt them in their business. They never think of being prominent in any project of charity or piety.

They seldom inquire of their pastor whether he needs help for the poor and the

orphans he must relieve. The question with them is not how to help, but how to keep from being asked to help. Often they hold themselves studiously aloof from participation in what interests the Catholic body. "They are going to have a fair," we heard a Catholic say of the one, now going on at Naughton hall, last week. One good man saw no sense in having a certain Catholic institution among us if it did not get supplies from him, and give him a chance to turn an honest penny.

The indifference of these persons has a fatal effect on the young, particularly on young men. They see their elders without interest in religion, absorbed in their private aims, and they are disheartened by knowing that they can do nothing no matter how earnestly they may wish it. They have no library, no reading room, no intellectual society, and so they drift into gratifying their whims; learning, very soon, to make amusement a business, and very late that a life so begun ends in failure and ruin.

Catholics ought to cultivate a better understanding and acquaintance with their pastors. They should go to the priest not only to tell their own perplexities, but to listen to his. They should know the affairs of the Church, seminary, orphan asylum, schools, hospitals, not to carp and censure, but to advise, sympathize and aid. These works of charity and religion are theirs, not the priest's. He is the spiritual father of the people but, temporarily, he is the organizer of their charities, and the factor of their liberality towards the needy. As such he needs the intelligent sympathy of Catholic people as much as their substantial aid.

247.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, April 10, 1875 (2)

Worldly Piety

The ghastliest of corpses is the body of pious works out of which the soul of a pure intention has gone. When a man has kept hold of outward observances of religion after having forgotten eternity and judgment, he exhibits a spectacle for Angels to weep over. Subverting the principles, he makes means, end, and end, means. "*Utimur fruentis, fruimur utendis*," says St. Augustine--"We place enjoyment in the things we ought to use, and make use of what we should enjoy." We should use health, influence, worldly goods to serve God with, and we strive for them to enjoy them.

We should aim to fill our minds with knowledge of God's law, and our hearts with hope and charity. But we use our knowledge of the law to gain worldly honor, and our very observance of the law to feed our pride with.

There is no one (unless by special miracle) that does not once in a while turn aside from the straight course at least a little. But he who never tries to direct his intention to God is always astray.

There are countless crooked ways, but only one straight one.

248 - Neglect of the Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Mass

When one has left the straight way, the smaller the angle of his deflection is, the more perilous is his estrangement from justice. He that falls headlong a great distance down will be roused by the shock, and hasten to climb up again; but he who falls but a little way will imagine that he has not fallen at all. He does not shock his self-respect; he does not incur the censure of others. He seems white, and may never discover that he is a sepulchre.

Of the two living side by side who fall into sin, he who falls the more shockingly is in the more hopeful way.

248.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, January 16, 1875 (1)

[Neglect of the Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Mass]

It is painful to notice the apathy of so many Catholics towards the Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Mass. Is it something in the atmosphere of this country that materializes souls and makes faith a barren tree? Do they not believe that Jesus Christ is really on the altar? Yes. Do they not believe that He is their redeemer, their enlightener, their strengthener, their consoler, their God and their all? Yes. Well, then, how is it that when the church door is open all day none come to visit Him? How is it that they stand in His presence during Mass and Vespers with idle thoughts, idle glances, idle words and motions!

Again, they believe that the Sacrifice of the Mass is the same in substance as the Sacrifice of the Cross. Yet they account it hardship to assist at Mass on Sundays and holidays, and make every little accident of cold or heat, of rain, or bad walking, of bodily distemper, an excuse for staying away. Should they go to Mass on a week day, they account it a feat worth telling to every friend they meet.

How many Catholics there are within our own knowledge who have never in their lives asked a priest to offer Mass for them or theirs!

They do not forget to send for a physician when they are ill; to ask loans when they want to meet their bills. But they never think of bringing the special blessing of God on their undertakings, their risks, their families, their living and departed friends, by the unbloody Sacrifice which they could obtain for the asking. The saying of the prophet is still coming forth from the tabernacle, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands to a people not believing and contradicting me."

249.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, September 17, 1859 (2)

Without Faith.

We can conceive of no state of mind more pitiable than that of a man without faith. It is better, at least, for one's present happiness to believe in a lie than to believe nothing at all. Without faith, life is reduced to a senseless struggle to prolong an aimless, useless existence. If there is no hereafter, if men have no fixed destiny, if truth and justice are not to triumph at last, of what use are effort, zeal, earnestness? What room is there for hope, or day-dream of an end to which by self-sacrifice we may contribute?

Naturally we have many generous impulses. We would like to be happy ourselves and to make others happy. We could labor to instruct, to purify, to elevate our kind. But if we know no happiness for man, if we believe in nothing better than the present order of things, these impulses are checked and lost. But the checking of these impulses is equivalent to a moral death. When the soul is thrown entirely on the present, when it has nothing to aim at, nothing to hope for, it is worse than dead--for it is better to be dead than in joyless life.

This want of faith is visible in modern society, in literature, in philosophy, in political life.

In English poetry, the spirit of despair of Byron, Shelley, and the like, is manifest even in lighter writers. The author knows no grief for his heroes and heroines, but the mortification of pride, no joy but the gratification of a passion. So the good are made to marry, and the bad to lose a lawsuit by way of catastrophe.

In philosophy, it is assumed that we know nothing we have not seen or felt, and the vague uncertainties of different negative systems are granted to be the only food of the mind that craves truth.

In political life, the deep distrust in everything prevalent in men's minds, is manifest in the incoherence of political ideas. Society lauds liberty, yet crushes those who use it; praises popular institutions, yet builds up aristocracy; theorizes boldly, but in practice clings to tradition.

The *suspense of faith* is the awful curse that Protestantism has entailed upon the modern world. It had its birth in passion; and now that the passion is passed away the souls of men are left pining with unsatisfied religious wants, and wasting under the feeling of *inanition*.

250.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, June 11, 1853

Political and Religious Opinions.

It is melancholy to see men who have too much human respect or too much conscience, to renounce their faith, and publicly to proclaim their infidelity, trying to defend their denunciations of the Church by alleging their political freedom from its control. There *is* a distinction between religion and politics. A Catholic may believe as he pleases on any question of political expediency. But this distinction depends on the nature of things, and not upon the caprice of him who holds the opinion. If a man *opines* what is contrary to truth, he cannot escape censure by saying that his is a merely *political* opinion. If I proclaim that murder or treason is lawful, I cannot avoid being condemned by the Church, by falling back on my political freedom. I cannot make *that* political which is not in its own nature political.

Yet the men of whom we have spoken seem to imagine that it is possible to maintain any opinion, provided only they name it political,--nay, that a political opinion and a religious opinion, each contradictory to the other, may be held by the same person at the same time.

Thus, for example, they hold that the human race is bound to progress, in virtue of a force of human nature, to a state of political and social felicity; and that is their *political* opinion. On the other hand they believe that human nature is fallen--that all good, temporal and spiritual, comes to man through his Redeemer and the Church--that this life is a pilgrimage, and eternity is our home,--and that is their *religious* opinion.

They tell us that the pope and the councils are weak old men whose decisions are often absurd and impolitic:--*political opinion*. And again they profess, with the host of believers, that the pope is the vicar of Jesus Christ, guided in all his dogmatic and moral decisions by the infallible spirit of truth:--*religious opinion*.

In their *political* opinion, bishops and priests are a set of bigots and imposters, who keep the people ignorant in order to sway them; while they *religiously* acknowledge bishops and priests to be *pastors*, having the authority of Christ to guide the people to eternal life.

As "citizens and voters," they hold that the Church is to be treated as a human institution, modified as times progress--and controlled by public opinion: as Catholics, they maintain the Church to be a supernatural body, inspired by the Holy Ghost, as far above public opinion as heaven is above earth.

Their *political* opinion is, that a man ought to be a good, pleasant companion--to stay away from Mass on Sundays, and never approach the Sacraments--without fear of going to hell, even though he should die in sin; but their *religious* belief is, that all the

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precepts of the Church ought to be obeyed, and that Christ will judge every man according to his works, rendering an eternal retribution of pain to those who have done wrong, and of happiness to those who have done well.

Now, we do not deny, as we have already said, that there is a distinction between political and religious opinion. With political expediency or in expediency, the Church has nothing to do. Whether Cuba and Mexico and Canada and South America and China are to be annexed to the United States are questions of expediency, on which good Catholics may hold what opinion they choose. But we protest against a person's being allowed to slander the Church, to criticise her doctrines, to disobey her precepts, to preach infidelity,--and at the same time *call himself a Catholic*. Let him be either hot or cold. If he would be an infidel, let him subscribe to the anti-Bible convention at Hartford. But if he would call himself a Catholic, let him be a Catholic. No bitterer enemies of the Church, as could easily be demonstrated from history, were ever found than those time-servers--parasites in the courts of tyrants, and demagogues in Republics--who call themselves "liberal," instead of "licentious" Catholics.