

## **V. Spiritual Life**

### **E. Youth Issues**

**272.**

Address, *The Catholic Columbian*, September 18, 1875

#### **Reply of Bishop Rosecrans To an address by the St. Aloysius Society of Portsmouth, O. (summary)**

*On Sunday, September 12, 1875 Bishop Rosecrans administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to 63 persons in Holy Redeemer Church, Portsmouth. That evening a committee of the parish's St. Aloysius Society called at the parish rectory and addressed the bishop, welcoming him and thanking him for the honors he had bestowed upon them, including a personal letter of benediction upon their founding twelve months earlier. In the letter he told them that their religion was "the noblest badge of our manhood." Among many other remarks, they ascribed the success of their society to their pastor and to the bishop.*

The Rt. Rev. Bishop responded in substance, as follows:

The spirit of your address touches me to the heart. It is that which I pray to see burning in the bosoms of all Catholic young men in this country. In no other way can they assert and maintain their manhood here, where true manhood wins. It is not your Catholicity which shuts you out from honor in this country. Honesty is a fatal bar to political aspiration. But your Catholicity manfully avowed, and steadfastly adhered to, will wring respect from the American people in despite of prejudice and calumny. Persevere in the sentiments you have avowed, and you will compel the respect of all whose respect is worth having, in addition to the approval of Him before whom we all stand or fall.

**273.**

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, Sept. 11, 1875 (1)

#### **A Career for Catholic Young Men**

There is no denying that the mass of Catholic young men fail to appreciate their vocation. After their First Communion very many of them neglect their religious duties one after another, with the necessarily damaging result of a life dragged out under the shadow of God's curse.

Here, one becomes known as a blasphemer, there, another passes down step by step into a drunkard's grave. This one suffers the mental and bodily blight wrought by impure excesses. That one loses his piety first and then his faith. On them the knowledge of God's revelation, the grace of Baptism, of Confirmation, of the Holy

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Eucharist, and the whole supernatural life for which the martyrs were willing to give even their blood, are lost. This is a solemn fact, attested by nearly every pastor's experience. Now what do these recreant Catholics get in exchange for the graces they squander? Darkness of understanding, remorse of conscience and the contempt of the world they foolishly fawn upon in abandoning the practice of their faith. This and nothing more. They lived in the King's palace, had the Son of God for their brother, Mary for their mother, angels for companions, God for their inheritance. Neglecting their religious duties, "becoming as the horse and mule without understanding," they abandon their proud and secure position and enter into competition with those who are "without hope and without God, in the world." Nero, Emperor of the world, earned the contempt of history because he had the ambition to compete with the horse-jockeys. Every Christian youth will earn the world's contempt, his own self-reproach and the scorn of the very demons, by postponing the goods of faith to the delusions of sense.

The career for Catholic young men is to be Catholics. Life is short. Eternity is all that is worth aiming at. Eternity alone will unravel mysteries, satiate longings, cool heartburnings, pay for sufferings, refute calumnies, adjust all wrongs, and bring perfect and enduring peace.

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Letter, *The Catholic Telegraph*, July 16, 1874

### **Catholic Young Men's Societies**

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, [CHURCHTOWN]  
WASHINGTON CO., O., July 11, 1874

MY CHILDREN IN GOD: Your excellent letter asking the special blessing of your spiritual chief on your efforts to establish and propagate a society of Catholic young men in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in Portsmouth, consoled me yesterday on the eve of my departure for this place. Nothing could be nearer my heart than the establishment of just such societies. It is sad to see Catholic young men, shortly after beginning life for themselves, gradually yield to the ways and ideas of the prosperous and pretentious unbelievers among whom they must live, and cease by little and little to understand the nobility of their faith. Without renouncing it openly, they learn to live without it. Without believing them they repeat the sneers and sometimes slanders of unbelievers against the clergy and religion, and sometimes end by entangling themselves in the secret and forbidden oaths of secret societies. Now, there can be no loftier basis of union than one whose object is to honor the Catholic religion. It contains all that makes life desirable.

It gives scope to the mightiest and most searching intellect, and it bends itself

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down to satisfy the simple wants of the most unlettered. The greatest men of history--monarchs, statesmen, warriors, scholars, philosophers, poets and painters--have considered themselves honored by bearing the name of Catholic. The world has no progress that shall ever tarnish the glory of the Catholic Church

The badge of your Society will be the confession of your faith and your best title to respect. Now that the world is so bitter in its opposition to our faith, it is all the more honorable in you to profess it openly, to live for it, and, if called upon, to die for it. May God bless you, then, and multiply you and give you peace and perseverance!

Your father in God,  
+S. H. ROSECRANS,  
Bishop of Columbus.

To the members of the St. Aloysius Sodality, Portsmouth, Ohio.

275.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, July 24, 1875 (1)

### **Young Men's Catholic Societies**

We have repeatedly urged the necessity of a Catholic Central Association in this city, to be composed of delegates from the various Catholic Societies of Columbus, whose duty it shall be to look after the interests of our holy religion in those places where it is striving for a foothold, and where bigotry and intolerance would not allow it the rights guaranteed to all religions.

Once again we call the attention of our young men to the good results obtained through the influence of the Catholic Central Association of Cleveland, where it is strong and working hard, not for honor and glory, but for the good of souls. Its young men are enthusiastic in the cause of Catholicity, and they permit no opportunity to escape where they can, by word or deed, promote its principles. They, by turns, teach Catechism to those confined in the workhouse, visit the sick and those in need of consolation; in fine, they interest themselves in every sort of charitable work that comes under their observation. The proper celebration of religious festivals is always carried on with their assistance, and the inaugurating of nearly every observance is left to them. They have taken in hand the celebration of the centennial of Daniel O'Connell, which occurs on the 6th prox., and right well, indeed, will the day be observed. This single instance will show the necessity of a kindred organization in Columbus. A society should exist here which should have executive powers, and to which all matters of general interest might be referred and acted upon.

Let the Catholic young men of Columbus therefore show that they are not behind those of other cities, nor lacking in that fervor which is not dampened by adverse circumstances or by slight failures in the beginning.

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What society in the city will take the matter in hand and call a general convention of the societies for forming therefrom a Catholic Central Union?

Let us see if our young men are going to always stand aloof from associations to which they should feel themselves bound to belong. Association is the greatest safeguard, especially of young men, and many of them now daily hear their faith reviled and its votaries condemned, whilst slanderers and falsifiers are found on every side. Do they show by their manner, by their speech, that they are prepared to meet these assaults? No, many believe that if they assist at early Mass on a Sunday or holiday, their duty is quite fulfilled.

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Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, Oct. 23, 1875 (5)

### **[To Follow the Crowd]**

The Catholic young man who, after having been respectably educated and started into the world for his career, surrenders himself to the guidance and follows the maxims of the common herd of young men who have no faith is very foolish and very much to be pitied. He is like a prince who consorts with rowdies, like Nero who, when Emperor of Rome, sought fame as a fiddler and a horse jockey.

The Catholic youth knows from his religion the whole compass and meaning of all that human life contains. His unbelieving companions know nothing with certainty. To them romance is as real as facts, fancies are as substantial as faith. To them Christianity may be true or not, and Mormonism, and Spiritualism, and Atheism. They do not know, nor care. They know that eating and drinking and frolicking are pleasant and that is the life they propose to themselves.

The Catholic knows exactly the limits of good and evil. He does not know, by sight, all the good and pleasures the world contains, but he does know that none of them can satisfy the cravings of his soul, and therefore none are worth seeing. When he gives up therefore to follow the lead of those who have no faith, he exchanges honor for dishonor, pleasure for pain, peace for torment, certainty for doubt, light for darkness, the grace of God for the corruption of sin.

What youthful ambition is satisfied to plod on through life as the forgotten millions of generations gone by have done, toiling to live and living to die? Yet to embrace such a destiny the young Catholic often throws away his birthright to [an] immortal crown and his fellowship with the pure and great of Earth and Heaven.

277.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, April 11, 1878 (1)

**[Faith Wasted by Young Men]**

Very few Christians appreciate the gift of faith, unless in time of danger and persecution. The ease with which young people, educated Catholics in this country, let it go, is sickening. To see a young man, for whom the problem of life has been solved by his catechism, casting aside this priceless knowledge and throwing himself thoughtlessly into the weak uncertainties of his unbaptized associates, is a sight to make angels weep. When Catholic young men leave home for the work-shop, they counting house, or the profession, they seem to have no stability of faith to resist the fashions of speech and conduct that prevail among those who have no settled belief, and look upon piety as unmanly. They do not reason even on the point, why is piety unmanly? Is it not common sense to acknowledge God for Master? He *is* our Master whether we acknowledge it or not. Is common sense unmanly? What is there of respectable in lewd talk, in profane words, in dissolute actions? What strength of mind or superior intelligence is there in frequenting saloons, low theatres, gambling houses, and unclean dens? One stalwart Irish boy, whose adviser is his father, whose most intimate friend is his mother, the life of whose life is to bear cheerily the burthens that, borne thus, make home happy, is worth a thousand of those puny upstarts, who hang around the snobs that are fast demoralizing American society--aye ten thousand of them. These are the ones who, ennobled by their faith, make their own career in life. The others do not even sell themselves--they beg, and beg, to give themselves away.

278.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, August 26, 1876

**[The Corruption of Young Catholic Men]**

It is certainly a fact that in cities many young men after making their First Communion, and leaving school to do for themselves, gradually cease frequenting the Sacraments and taking care of their souls. Sad to say, many of them get habits of swearing, cursing and drinking, and impurity, with fearful swiftness; and by their evil example hinder many non-Catholics from even examining the real doctrines of the Catholic Church.

This is partly owing to their sudden exposure to social influences that are in every sense anti-Catholic. For the boy that learns a trade or gets a situation in a business house, or even leaves home to study a profession, must find companionship among those who despise and hate the Church, her ceremonies, teachings, practices and commands. In this company his very amiability betrays him. If it were a direct

attack against the dogmas of the Church he could stand the controversy; but the opposition is covert. And at the same time morality is undermined by lewd and blasphemous conversation. Solitary confinement in a dungeon were happiness, compared with the lot of those young men who are forced into continual contact with those "all the thoughts of whose imaginations" run to uncleanness and ribaldry, continually. When the sentiment of purity and uprightness is weakened, the road to the Church and to the Sacraments becomes hard to travel. The boy may lounge around the church of a fair Sunday now and then, but he will cease to come as he did before his innocence was soiled, and with prayer in his heart. By and by he will no longer be distinguished from the common herd of idlers, who spend their Sundays in riotous and often filthy amusements. Sometimes these young men become distinguished among their companions by being worse blasphemers, harder drinkers, more foul-mouthed talkers than those who never believed in God at all. To fall from a height causes greater ruin than to fall on the level ground. "The corruption of the best is the worst." But it must be borne in mind that these people become disorderly in social life, untrustworthy in business and altogether worthless, just in proportion as they neglect the command of the Church and then the contact of their clergy. He who will invent the means of making Catholic young men associate together in their holidays, give a Catholic interest to their enterprises, a Catholic tone to their tastes and conversations will prove himself more than a "public benefactor." He will be in his own sphere nothing short of an Apostle.

279.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, July 18, 1878 (3)

#### **[Danger of Drink]**

When you see young men remaining away from the meetings of the societies of which they were once members in good standing, there is danger ahead. Above all this is the case with those who belong to temperance societies. They may be in good faith, and intend to remain strong members of their society; but every time they remain away the breach is widened, till their pledge is broken. Then it is that they go down step by step until they become perfect sots, a disgrace to themselves and family. Young men, flee temptation, for "he that seeks the danger shall perish therein."

280.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, March 11, 1876 (2)

**[Why Many Catholic Boys become Worthless]**

Why do so many Catholic boys become worthless after making their First Communion and quitting school?

This question is asked anxiously by many parents and pastors of souls. On an average, nearly one hundred and fifty boys have made their First Communion every year for the past six years in this city. Yet when the congregations are called upon to aid any Catholic enterprise, the young men do not appear. The young men's societies do not increase by ten members to every hundred First Communicants.

Of course, you can account for this partially by saying that some of these came from outside the city and, having made their First Communion, went home; and that others found employment elsewhere. But of those remaining in the city, the number who neglect the Sacraments, and even Mass, is far greater than of those who remain steadfast, and so save both their souls and bodies. Human nature is frail. But it seems to us that the frailty of these poor young men is operated on, here, by two influences, which, when set forth in the light, will seem contemptible in the eyes of boys who had sense enough to learn their Catechism. One is a false notion of life, and the other is "society."

The prevalent notion of life is that a man works only because he wants to get the means to play. The young man in the store, or bank, or shop worries through the hours of his employment, thinking of the entertainment in prospect after it is over. The entertainment may be innocent, such as is found in the family. But the view is false. Apart from the Christian sense that all we do should be done for God, no young man can succeed unless he gives himself to understand that life consists not in playing, but in doing your work well. It matters not what the work is--if it is sweeping an office, or copying law papers--your heart must be put into it, or you will be a miserable failure. The habit of lounging about on the side-walks, in billiard rooms and saloons, and even around the Church, is the beginning of evil to many a Catholic boy.

Then "society," that rotten humbug, which frightens persons into doing what they would rather not do, lest they lose caste with people whom they honestly despise and freely back bite, comes in for mischief. Among us it often happens that a hard-handed, toiling father brings up a soft-handed son, giving him an education far superior to his own. This son associates with young men who would not condescend to shake hands with his father; and learns from their tone of talk and action that to go to the theatre, gambling houses, and worse; that to forget he had a mother and sister, and think only of obscenity; to cast off foolish notions of purity, piety, humility, is "the style" in society; and adapting himself to his new ideas, he has to stay away from Confession,

from Mass, and from contact with the priest he once loved so much. In the meantime, the associates who have transformed him despise him as one without any mind of his own. And thus, without recompense, he steepes his soul in sin and fills his body with disease.

## **F. Conversion**

**281.**

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, December 25, 1858 (3)

### **[Conversion a Gift of God.]**

The doctrine that conversion is the work of grace and must be looked for rather as the fruit of prayer, and of God's mercy, than as the effect of human effort, is singularly consonant with the dictates of reason and experience. One could almost reach the conclusion, by analyzing the act of conversion, and studying the difficulties in its way.

Every man is, in his own settled and unquestioning estimation, the centre of the world. In his view, all things are made, and events fall out, with reference to his interests and inclinations. The seasons change for his accommodation, and he reprehends the weather when it interferes with his plans. The man of state thinks the masses formed for his purposes; and the man of low degree turns the ruler to account, by gazing on the pomp and circumstance of greatness, without price. No matter what his rank, each human being measures the value of all things by their bearing on his already settled plans, so that, in his view, the world might as well be annihilated as to be without him.

Now conversion implies a complete revolution of this entire world, within the heart of man. "The mountains must be brought low and the valleys filled up." Its very beginning must be a conviction of the soul, that hitherto it has been going in a totally wrong direction. Then it must learn to love what it hated before, to honor what it despised, to strive after what it avoided. Outwardly, it must seek for new associations, new pursuits, a new estimation among men.

Conversion is a stupendous work--scarcely less than the creation of a soul, and compared most aptly by the Prophet Ezekiel--to the gathering together, and fitting joint to joint, and covering with flesh, and filling with warm blood, and new life, the scattered bones in a charnel house. Who but God alone, can do a work like this? Who but He that framed it can glide into the secret recesses of man's heart--that kingdom where his own *to ego* rules without a rival--and change all that lies hidden there--shatter the throne, and build up a new kingdom?

Besides the intrinsic greatness of the work, many difficulties in its way render conversion a more than human operation.



Every man is pre-occupied with his own cares and opinions, so that you cannot chain his attention to his own spiritual wants. Talk to a merchant of the loss of souls, and his fancy will wander to the insurance office; to the banker of treasures in heaven, and he begins to calculate the capital invested, the risk and per centage; to the farmer, of God's goodness and he will wonder why the season is so wet; to the young man, of the certainty of death and he will remember his grandfather's funeral; to the old man, of the terror of God's judgments, and you remind him that he has left off his flannels and may get the rheumatism. In short, your words are but a pebble thrown into the pool of thought, that sets the waves quivering all over the surface, but itself sinks to the bottom, lies still, and is forgotten.

But even supposing that you arrest the attention for a moment, and that you make an impression with a single truth. Grant, too, that the truth is logically connected with all the other truths of religion, your work is but begun. Men are not logicians, unless where they wish to be; and the conclusions of their premises are often as strange to them as revelations from the spirit world. You must arrest the attention and produce the impression, for every new truth you propose, and in the ordinary course of things, a score of generations would pass away before you could go over the twelve articles of the creed.

At last, though, your subject is convinced of the truth of faith. Who, now, is to make him act according to his conviction? to make him do what he now confesses he ought to do? Let any one who has the slightest experience of mankind, who knows how powerful are whims, and what trifles lighter than air originate them, answer, and we are sure he will say--this work is not the work of man. Reason, therefore, teaches faith, and faith renders infallible the conclusion of reason, that conversion is efficiently, whatever be its occasion, a work which God alone can perform on the free will.

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Editorials, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, July 19, Sept. 6, and Oct. 4, 1856

### **Conversion a Work of Grace.**

Persons converted to the Catholic Church from heresy or reclaimed from a course will sometimes attempt to trace out for themselves, and even describe to others, the various steps by which their conversion was effected. Such an attempt, we think, is no mark of self knowledge or of acquaintance with Catholic doctrine. Conversion being exclusively the work of grace cannot be a logical process. Of course, grace being *above*, and not *contrary to*, nature, does not exclude the operations of reason. A man may be converted *after* a process of study and reasoning; but he will never be converted *by* that process. There is a "great gulf" between the converted and unconverted state, which no faculty of nature can bridge over. Study may remove ignorance, exhortation may take

away the love of sin, great obstacles to the operation of grace, but they can do no more.

We have stated this well-known principle of Catholic theology in order to make from them one or two natural and useful deductions.

1. If solid reasoning cannot effect any one's conversion, *a fortiori*, angry denunciation, cutting sarcasm, and ridicule will be powerless; for these excite the passions opposed to grace. Without wishing to censure any one, we may say that there has been a class of Catholics who sometimes mistake their anger for zeal, their fondness for satire, for hatred of error, their vindictive recriminations for Christian and manly plainness of speech. These, unconsciously, no doubt, have done, and do, great harm. In removing ignorance, they replace it by an adversary of grace not less formidable than its self, namely, anger.

2. If conversion is a work of grace, it can never be brought about by flattering, any more than it can by irritating, the passions opposed to the operations of the Holy Ghost. The chief of these, and the one which gives tone and energy to all the rest, is pride. We cannot convert a nation by seeking out philosophical reasons for its national pride, nor an individual by laying before him all the gifts that distinguish him from common men. "God resists the proud;" and the Catholic who, instead of proposing considerations that are calculated to make those in error forget their pride, speaks of it *ex professo*, and justifies it, commits a grave mistake.

Of course, we would not unnecessarily offend any one's self-esteem. But there is vast difference between not *disputing* and *advocating* the pretensions of arrogance. By the latter course towards those outside the Church, we would foment the very passion that repels them from her, prejudice them still more against the truth, and make them despise ourselves.

These obvious conclusions from an indubitable principle of faith may assist our readers to form a correct estimate of the wisdom of a certain class of writers and speakers who are constantly passing and repassing between the extremes of adulation and abuse of the national characteristic of the people whose conversion they are seeking.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, September 6, 1856

### **True Zeal not Inactive.**

Some of our friends have expressed their fears lest a paragraph headed "Conversion the Work of Grace," which we published a few weeks ago, may be thought to encourage inaction on the part of Catholics in the work of converting to faith and virtue their erring brethren.

We should be sorry to hinder the conversion of a single soul, or even the suggestion of one good thought--they are too precious to Jesus Christ for us to value

them lightly. The paragraph alluded to was intended, not to excuse inaction, but to deprecate injudicious action. We had in our mind the manifestations of two kinds of zeal--the zeal that springs from pride, and the zeal which is the outgushing of divine charity, and we thought by discouraging the one to give room for the other.

The zeal that springs from pride is all the more common because it is comely in the eyes of those who exercise it. It is an active, bustling, desirous to repel slander, to convince error, to make converts, to spread the influence of the Church. It does not differ much from true zeal in the intensity of the energy it evokes. Its bad origin appears in the want of patience and prudence, in the absence of loving expedients to win, in the disregard of minor truths, in the fondness for sarcasm and invective, in the selfish and worldly views which it gives birth to in the soul and actions. Thus persons sometimes devote themselves to the service of the Church, yet retain all their worldly feelings. Their zeal is very apt to be false.

When a man eager for notoriety becomes a Catholic, and begins to grieve that the Church is not sufficiently esteemed by the world, his zeal is very likely false.

When a converted dabbler in politics begins to lament that the Church of God is opposed by all parties, he displays a zeal, indeed, but not Christian zeal.

When a Fourth of July orator, having submitted himself to the Church, wants the country converted, in order to perpetuate our civil institutions, thus urging us to save souls, in order to retain political forms, to compass eternity, in order to enjoy time, he may think himself a zealous Catholic, but he is very far from the spirit of charity, from the footsteps of the Crucified. False zeal is active enough, but its activity is not of the right character. Those who are governed by it become insolent by the possession of the truth, they argue, contradict, sneer, denounce, make religion repulsive by identifying themselves with it, are full of exterior bustle. But they do not *pray* for the conversion of the world. Their apostolate is only fitted for the market place and public gatherings; and they brawl in highways and companies, while Jesus is alone in the deserted church and silent sanctuary. They have no communion, no corporal works of charity, no fasting, no spiritual or corporal austerities, no special devotions to the Mother of Mercy, by which to draw down the blessing of God on the erring world.

Shakspeare represents the quaint Captain Fluellen, when, at the close of the battle of Agincourt, King Henry V. commanded it to be proclaimed throughout his host that God alone was the author of the victory, as conceding that "God *was* of great assistance to them, no doubt."

It is thus that these false zealots concede to God some part in the conversion of a soul. *They* must be up and doing, with logic and sarcasm and denunciation, and the world will be converted by what they say--but "*of course* they do not deny that God was of great assistance to them."

We want activity among Catholics, not the activity of noisy controversialists, but

of men who have no political aims or aspirations, of men who do not court notoriety or strive for "respectability," of men who are unselfish, who love Jesus Christ, and the souls He has bought so dearly, with disinterested love, of men who draw others to them by the sweet odor of sanctity they diffuse around them, who charm hearts and lift them to God by their unfaltering faith, their cheerful hope, their unfeigned charity. This is the activity we want--the activity of prayer and holy lives; and this is the activity to which we would incite the Catholics of the country, young and old--not tying down their aspirations to a contemptible though good temporal object, but permitting them to soar even to the infinite--the possession of God.

We have been shown an article in an Eastern paper, in which the lay editor censures the proposition contained in the paragraph, which gave occasion to the foregoing article, from a theological point of view. We have no intention of replying to this article, which declares, with a levity indicative of the false zeal of which we have spoken above, our doctrine to be that of Luther, Calvin, Baius and Jansen. We will simply give an instance of the loose reasoning with which the writer established our heterodoxy.

He controverts the following proposition: "There is a great gulph between the converted and unconverted state, which no faculty of nature can bridge over."

Now this proposition can be false only in two hypotheses, viz: Either there is *no* gulph between the converted and unconverted state, "or the 'gulph' is not such as to be incapable of being bridge over by some faculty of nature."

The writer does not seem to assume the first hypothesis, but admits a gulph, or wide difference between the two states, the converted and unconverted. He therefore takes the second, and asserts, of necessity, that some faculty of nature *can* bridge over the gulph between the converted and unconverted states--a proposition thus stated, clearly Pelagian.

This proposition he proves as follows:

"Reason leads to faith; Reason is addressed by faith; reason listens to, and *supernaturalized*, accepts the faith--There is your bridge over!"

The demonstration ends by admitting the proposition it is designed to confute. To "accept the faith" "reason" must be "*supernaturalized*"--by what? by any "natural faculty?" No. Therefore, "the gulph between the converted and unconverted state cannot be bridged over by any natural faculty," but by grace alone.

We advise the writer of the article criticizing us, and the counsel may be useful to all, to go through a course of prayer and study before attempting to wrote on grace. The world is full enough of miserable errors on that most difficult subject now. Let us not add to the swarming mass of heresies that have been festering through ages, another false theory or another proud advocate. We admit the purity of his motives, but let him remember that we all stand by humility, and the position of a layman acting

as theological censor of a clergyman is not one of humility.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, October 4, 1856

### Conversion and Grace.

Our Eastern cotemporary has renewed his assault upon us. As in the present attack he clearly, though indirectly, asserts, that he is "reverent to the ecclesiastical discipline of his place of abode," we shall treat his censure with the respect its extrinsic character demands.

He has extracted from our paragraph published last summer two propositions, which he censures as contrary to the Council of Trent and the bull of his Holiness Pius IX.

They are as follows: 1st. Conversion is exclusively the work of grace; 2d. Conversion is not a logical process.

The first proposition may be variously understood according to the class of objects shown by the context to be designated by the adverb "exclusively."

[1.]To say that conversion is exclusively the work of grace *may* mean, that grace alone, without the intervention of created instrumentality, converts souls, but such a meaning would be strained and violent--though in a certain sense true--since the instrumentality, such as sacraments, etc., *applies* the grace--but, the grace converts.

2. It may mean also that grace alone, to the exclusion of the co-operation of the human will, enlightens the understanding and purifies the heart--but this meaning is also strained; since the operations of grace suppose--and therefore do not exclude--the activity of will and intellect--as the removal of an obstacle (*removens prohibens*) in the way of their efficacy. In this distorted construction the proposition would be false and heretical.

3. It may mean, lastly, that grace alone, i.e., unassisted by the ill-timed denunciations, the fierce sarcasms, the defiant invectives of men, who know not (perhaps, care not) what spirit their zeal is of--grace alone, working in its ordinary channels, drawn down from above by the prayers of the poor, and made operative in unconverted souls by the holy example of pious congregations, would convert sinners and unbelievers most effectually. This was the sense in which our context shows to any mind above a quibbler's that we meant to be taken from the proposition, and in this sense we maintain it to be true. More advantage (this our sincere belief) has come to the Church from the prayers and good example of one single pious servant girl, than from all the egotistical efforts of that clique of impetuous and haughty writers who some time since undertook "to make Catholics hold up their heads, like men, in this country."

The second proposition can be distorted into but one false sense, as far as we can see. If it be read "conversion is not a *logical* process," it may mean that conversion is an

*illogical* process--and this is the distorted interpretation scarcely, one should think, out of "reverence for ecclesiastical discipline at home," put on the sentence, by our Eastern censor. The natural meaning of the proposition is: "Conversion is not a *logical* process, but a process of a different nature,"--and in this sense it is undeniably true.

We understand, and so, we believe, does the "world of letters," by a *logical* process, a process in which the intellect, without going out of itself, simply evolves and formulizes, whether by synthesis or analysis, the principles or general ideas it has perceived. Now from such a process conversion differs in many points:

1st. Because in conversion the intellect does not evolve what it already contained, but receives from without the entire body of revelation *upon authority*.

2d. Because in conversion the intellect has the lesser and the *will* the greater part to perform.

3d. Because a logical process can be perfected without the aid of grace, whereas even the intellectual part of conversion cannot.

It is therefore not only a heresy in religion, but an absurdity in philosophy, that conversion, or the change of both will and understanding, is a work of the understanding only.

If our censor still insists upon misinterpreting our meaning after this explanation, we shall leave him to his small circle of intelligent readers. His absurd attempt to appear learned by quoting papal bulls and the Council of Trent in support of the most obvious maxims of Catholic Theology, created as much amusement for us, as his pertinacious endeavors to distort the sense of our former paragraph, excited commiseration.

We can scarcely believe that the tone of insolent contempt assumed by our censor towards us, is dictated by his "reverence for ecclesiastical discipline" at home. As he alludes to the fact of his being too widely known to inquire of us what he shall say, we may suggest that notoriety gives no man a right to dogmatize on subjects he has not studied, or to attack and misrepresent those by whose general censure of an evil he feels himself galled.

The point of our, by this time, famous paragraph, which so annoyed our (in his humble way) "St. Paul and St. Augustine," is one worth insisting upon, and upon which we shall insist, until admonished to desist by some one who is "reverent to ecclesiastical discipline" not only at home, but wherever he finds it.

It is this: that conversions are not effected by denunciation, sarcasm, and wrangling, but by holy example, fervent prayer, gentle persuasion, and earnest instruction. If all Catholics were faithful to the obligations of their religion, detached from the world, full of the spirit of prayer, just in their dealings, humble, meek, modest, sober, diligent, charitable and patient, heresy could not hold out in this country ten years. And, on the other hand, if all were such wranglers as the class against which our

paragraph was pointed, the Church would be exterminated by mobs, withered up in its inward life by want of devotion, before the next generation takes our place.

Conversions are the fruit of grace. Grace, like the dew of heaven, loves to come down, unseen. It seeks a dwelling in the heart, humbled by contemplation of pure example, and flies from the bosom torn with desire to avenge insult. God wills, that no "flesh shall glory in His sight," that the "weak overcome the strong," the "foolish confound the wise," and therefore, that the Cross of Christ triumph not only over His enemies, but in the hearts of those who think themselves His friends!

In trying to convert our brethren (still we say,) let us rely more upon prayer and good example than upon our powers of reasoning and abuse.

**283.**

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, December 11, 1858

### **Where we Stand.**

The Catholic Church, in the spirit of her Divine Founder, stretches forward to the conquest and salvation of every soul for which His blood was poured out. With none of the fierce eagerness of fanaticism, she has all the energy and activity of her early days, and she presses us vigorously and untiringly on in the work of converting all nations, as though she had never yet had a struggle, or achieved a triumph. So she desires the conversion of the United States; just as she longs for the conversion of New Caledonia, China, or Japan. And her children, here, in the great Republic, sympathising with her wishes, are stimulated by natural affection towards friends and kinsmen, to strive with all their energies to obtain so desirable an end.

Yet how are we to co-operate with the grace of God, in this sublime work of a nation's conversion? How are we to employ the energies He has given us, in order best to further the design? Can we do anything more, from least to greatest, than follow the precepts of faith, give edification, and pray? Is there any standing-point from which the heart of the nation may be reached, and appealed to by reasoning, exhortation, reproof, persuasion? Can the word of faith not be so shaped as to force its way into the thoughts and convictions of American as well as of other men?

Of course the Catholic clergy have enough to do in administering the Sacraments, and providing for the instruction of the young and ignorant in their flocks. But there is a great amount of lay talent, and fervor, which, instead of spending itself aimlessly, might be employed for God, could we only get the right answer to the query we have proposed above.

We believe that there is a point from which religion may be made to reach the American heart, and from which human means and human talents may be humbly employed to co-operate with God. As the Athenians of old showed their inclination for

piety to St. Paul, by the number of their superstitious temples and altars, so our countrymen display a religious spirit in the multitude of errors in vogue amongst them. Truth must be sorely wanted, where gross counterfeits obtain such easy currency.

Yet how is it, that this religious spirit is never evoked by those invincible proofs of Catholic truth which sometimes find their way to the non-Catholic public? How is it that submission to the Church does not follow conviction of her divine mission? Perhaps because all appeals hitherto relied on, have supposed some positive religious conviction in the mind of Protestants--whereas, whatever prejudices early education may have implanted, none such exists. To prove the Church from the Bible, to an American, is as useless as to establish the Real Presence by the works of Luther.

The Bible will answer to prove anything they want proved, but not to establish anything disagreeable. The essential principle of natural religion, the conviction of dependence on God, of responsibility to Him as judge, the necessity of curbing passion and obeying reason, of which no man can be ignorant, are all to which one can safely appeal in the minds of our countrymen. These have their power, however, and might be made the basis of reasoning and exhortation.

The word of faith must be tempered with love, and the mind of the writer or speaker must be directed steadily to the good of those he addresses.

284.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, October 25, 1856

#### [Tempests of Conversion.]

There are, no doubt, thousands and tens of thousands of Protestants in the United States and England, who are continually struggling against the strong fear, if not the settled conviction that the Catholic Church is right, and the Reformation wrong. After all they have heard in her abuse, after all the prejudices they have conceived against her, they remember, that she is the oldest church--that all others are cut off and "gone out" from her communion; and as the reflection that unless the religion of Christ was a failure for many centuries, the Roman Catholic must be the true church, it sends a pang shooting through their hearts. To them as to the pagan Romans, the Catholics seem to be "a pestilent sect, hostile to the human race." (Vid. Tac.) To become a Catholic is to renounce ties of friendship and kindred, to bid farewell to hopes, and plans of worldly advancement. It is to surrender their individuality, to give up their own opinions, views and practices, to crush all feeling of delicacy, and bow without condition, or remonstrance to the dictation of a priest. No one born and educated a Catholic, can fully understand, what a tempest of forebodings, apprehension and despondency, riots in the soul of a Protestant, about to embrace the true faith. It is something like the surrender which the soul makes at death, of all earthly possessions



and hopes. Their life is come, no matter how long youth and health may promise it to be, is represented in their fancy as a dreary blank; and they look forward through the black interval to death, as a welcome release from obloquy and loneliness.

Nor is the enemy of souls without plausible grounds upon which to build so terrifying a fabric of fancies. To be a Catholic *is* something awful in our country and times. Although Dr. Brownson was never insulted for being a Catholic, persons less distinguished than he, have been, and are still, made heartsick by social persecution in this free and enlightened country. Kindred are alienated from kindred; servants are discharged from employment; mendicants sent away unrelieved, are loaded with maledictions; and even while we write, a poor pale-faced man, scarcely able to walk, from disease of the heart, comes in and tells us, that when he applied for relief to a certain physician, not far from Wade street, whom he had once "done little jobs" for--the physician told the faint and tottering invalid with a sneer, to "go to the priests, and let them renew the miracles of St. Patrick, by curing him."

The savage spirit of Know-Nothingism is widely spread through the country; and where it has nothing to fear from the vengeance of the money-god, it insults, calumniates and oppresses without remorse.

It is no wonder, then, that Protestants are afraid to look towards the Church, to investigate its claims and to study its doctrines. They shrink from grappling with the question, because they fear that if they study it, they *will have to become Catholics*.

Hence they love to hear Catholics slandered and abused. As each clamor is raised, they are soothed with the persuasion that they cannot be wrong in refusing to enter the Church which people are so unanimous in crying down.

Nor is this at all singular. Protestants cleave to their cupidities in one way, and many Catholics another. They resist the voice of God calling them to the faith; we resist it calling us to higher sanctity. They wander over the barren wastes of infidelity, and refuse to follow the good Shepherd into the pastures of truth; we, amid the delights of our spiritual paradise, wanting courage to mortify ourselves, neglect to "taste and see that the Lord is sweet."

We should therefore pity the frailty of our Protestant friends, and remove our own [frailties], amend ourselves by a more spiritual life, and cure them by more fervent prayers.

285.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, April 23, 1859

### **Making Converts.**

Much zeal is manifested among a certain class of Catholics for making converts to the Church. They make great professions of regard for those without the Church,

being very tender to their prejudices, very considerate of their feelings, and very reverent toward their rank and position. They are ready to acknowledge that Catholics are wrong in every other respect but religion. They are happy to acknowledge that every difference between Catholic and Protestant nations, is to the advantage of the latter, and to declare emphatically their conviction, that nothing is wanting to the perfection of non-Catholics, but the adoption of the true religion. They lament that the Catholic Church seems to be linked with a dead body in the social and political order, just as non-Catholics are dragging after them the carcass of Protestantism, in the religious order. Now these Catholics desire the conversion of their brethren with evident sincerity. They sacrifice no little convenience and self-respect, to accomplish it. They do not hesitate to censure, and even quarrel with their fellow Catholics, to further their purpose. They may therefore be expected to reflect, if their attention is called to the subject, on what they aim at when they propose to convert a non-Catholic.

To convert, is to change one's state from worse to better. Now what is there bad in the state of a non-Catholic? Nothing temporal, certainly. He has wealth, influence, worldly comfort, and popular prejudice to soothe him. What you think bad in his condition, therefore, must be something in the spiritual order, it must be his burthen of unpardoned sin, his ignorance of the end of life, his troop of vices, tormenting him like so many devils, his spiritual pride, his preference of the temporal to the eternal, his forgetfulness of God and his fast-coming ruin and utter desolation.

Now would it be of any advantage to a man to stop calling himself a Protestant, and give himself out a Catholic, unless in so doing he renounced his Protestant spirit of worldliness, his spiritual pride, his low temporal aims? If a man is to waste his years in seeking his talents, in praising, what the gentiles seek, indulging the passions, the piques, envy, rancor, vanity, which they indulge, of what use is it to get him to proclaim himself a Catholic?

We do not want any worldly converts. If any man desires to be rich, to gain office, to propagate political opinions, or to aggrandize himself in any worldly way, he had better remain outside of the Church. Let him not become a Catholic unless he is ready to give up all things for his soul's sake, unless he wants to bid good bye to the world, until the day of judgment. He will find too much for flesh and blood to endure in the Church, unless he had made up his mind to crucify his flesh and pour out his blood, in order to save his soul. It is true that an hundred fold is added to the substantial happiness of those who seek God, in truth: but the hundred fold never is given to those who long after it.

A worldly Catholic is worse off than a worldly Protestant. He is tortured with a consciousness of degradation, and weighted down by a responsibility proportioned to his clearer knowledge.

If you want a man to live for worldly aims, to live in the whirl of worldly

excitements, as you love him, let him be ignorant of what he ought to believe, do not try to "convert" him. Let him repose in his dream of enjoyment and popularity, as he may. It is better to let him sleep, as his barque of life glides towards the cataract, than to awake him to what may distract him more than sleep. We want no converts who are hunting money, or enjoyment, or politics, or civilization. "If any man will come after me let him take up his cross."

286.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, November 17, 1855

### To Convince and To Convert.

"I can *convince* Protestants," said the famous controversial writer, Cardinal de Perron, "but they must go the Bishop of Geneva (St. Francis of Sales) to be *converted*."

Unreflecting people are apt to imagine that there is no difference between these two--*conviction* and *conversion*. If they are Catholics, they say, "if we could but get our Protestant neighbors to read such or such a book, or hear such a discourse, they would seek admission into the Church forthwith." If Protestants, they take it for granted that they are such from deliberate conviction, and that the reason why they are not Catholics is because their intellect is not satisfied with the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Few people reflect enough on themselves to find out how little reason has to do with their daily actions. Those who are in the habit of being guided by impulse of self-interest, ambition, or sensuality, almost always flatter themselves that in their religious persuasion they are enlightened, conscientious. Alas! how small a pretext, how silly a sophism is able to put the mind to sleep when the interests of eternity are at stake!

Conversion is a grace, a free gift of God, and is therefore more to be prayed for, than expected as the fruit of study. Like all graces, it demands our co-operation. Like all graces, it is super-added to nature, and therefore often comes in a way that seems to be natural--by good associations, good books, a good and virtuous life--noiseless as the dew. Yet it is a grace, and cannot be looked for as the fruit of labor, the result of controversy, the effect of reading. It must come from God.

We have proof enough of this in the history of the late conversions to the Church, in England and America. We see then a hundred instances of "one being taken and the other left."

Dr. Pusey had read as much, and, no doubt, was as thoroughly convinced as Dr. Newman. Yet Dr. Pusey remains clinging to the rotten establishment. Hundreds of their associates, no doubt, followed Faber, Manning, Wilberforce, etc., through all their intellectual wanderings; yet remained behind them in their practice. There are plenty of Episcopal clergymen as purely persuaded of the truth of the Catholic religion as Bishop Ives, or the ministers Major, Huntingdon, Forbes; yet these are taken, the others left.

Why is this, but that conversion is not the fruit of study and labor, but of grace, which is the fruit of prayer, the meed of the lowly of heart?

Hence it is that pride is the great obstacle of conversion. "God resists the proud," both because He gives not to those who ask not, and because pride chokes in the heart the beginnings of grace, and renders impossible the efficacy of its abundance. Those who stand up before God to cavil at what He has revealed to be believed or practiced, can hardly be expected to subject their caprices to His will.

On this account we seldom indulge in conjecture about the prospects of Catholicity in this country. Those prospects are in the hands of God. We do not see in our countrymen any remarkable degree of humility that would indicate their readiness to co-operate with what grace may be given them; and therefore, humanly speaking, are not at all sanguine of their speedy conversion.

It is the opinion of more than one, whose wisdom gives their opinions great weight, that the conversions in England began by the prayers of the Passionist Order, instituted for that purpose, and were so numerous in consequence of the enthusiastic crusade of prayer of the pious Father Ignatius (Hon. Mr. Spencer,) of the same Order. We do not doubt it. Preaching may convince the world; prayer must convert it.