

V. Spiritual Life

D. Other Issues of Persons

f. Sin

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Sermon, Book 2, No. 4

Mortal Sin

(incomplete)

Which way so ever we turn our eyes in the world, they are encountered by scenes of sorrow. Men are hurrying to and fro with eager steps and yearning hearts, seeking for happiness, and they find it not. There are none exempt from suffering. The gayest hearts must be wrung many and many a time with anguish, and the most buoyant spirits often flag and fail. Poverty and sickness are in the world, filling it with sadness; war, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, storms by sea and land, are in the world desolating homes, blighting hopes, and withering up joys; oppression and wrong and calumny are in the world, drying up the fountains of hope and gladness, pouring their torrents of bitterness upon ardent souls and causing them to groan with anguish. The earth is a great valley of tears. The so-called joys of sense, hollow and unsatisfactory as they are, serve but to render more striking by their contrast the woes that make humanity wail. The festive hall, around whose doors death is grimly lurking, the banquet room, on whose wall the mysterious hand is writing the doom of the guests, the bridal train, on whose heels crowds the funeral procession, the laugh that is succeeded by a wail, the smile that lights eyes yet wet with tears, but give by their mockery a stronger relief to the woes that are gnawing away at the hearts of men. Deny it who will, ignore or try to ignore it who may, disbelieve it who has not yet learned it by experience, this world is, in sober truth, a world of suffering and sorrow. The few and momentary delights felt by those whom prosperity enables to gratify their passions, like gleams of lightening that on a midnight sky, making manifest how thick is the darkness, but render more striking the fact that woe is the inheritance of all the children of Adam.

What it is now, the world has been in every age of its history. That history is but a record of wars, famines, pestilences, inundations: that is, of sorrows. All its generations have one after another been born in anguish, lived a few days and full of trouble, and died in agony. The voice of every age has gone up wailing to the sky. The great stream of human existence that started from the garden of Eden, and went out broadening over the earth and flowing down through the ages, comes to us salt with the tears, as it is crimson with the blood and foul with the crimes, of humanity.

Now whence came it, beloved friends, that the world is and always was a world of woe? God made it not so. He did not make our bodies to be tortured by pains,

wasted by diseases, and destroyed by death. He did not fill our hearts with yearning after goods in order that they might feel with torture the presence of evil, He did not put hope in our souls in order that hope might be blasted, nor love in order that it might [be] turned into hate. He made not the world that it might [be] the scene of wars and conflagrations, the abiding place of pestilence and death. It was His design and His gift that we should be immortal and happy. He intended the skies to be ever bright, the seasons to bring no change of comfort, the flowers to be ever blooming, the ocean to be ever tranquil, the earth to be the home of peace and serene joy. What was it that disfigured the works which he pronounced good, that made disorder in the harmony He had established, caused calamity and pain to supplant the joy he made?

It was Sin--mortal sin. "By one man sin entered the world and, by sin, death." (Rom v.12) By sin, death--death and all the calamities of which death is the sum and the end. By sin, sickness and pain, hunger, thirst, weariness, torture for the body; by sin fear, terror, disappointment, despair for the soul; by sin war, famine, pestilence, earthquake, shipwrecks; by sin, death. By sin, and by one single sin, these calamities were brought into the world.

Now if one single sin deserved as a punishment all the calamities that afflict the human race, how unspeakable, how incomprehensible must be the malice of mortal sin! But faith discloses to us yet more of the effects of sin, faith opens to us a vista of horror, in comparison with which the temporal effects of sin are blessings and joys.

Pass in imagination under the guidance of faith, back over the six thousand years in which this earth has existed to the time when no stars were yet set in the firmament and no earth spun in the air. You see millions of bright spirits, pure intelligences, radiant with the sublime qualities of intellect and free will, created to honor the adorable Trinity. You look again, and behold them hurled, like lightning, from their places near the throne of God, down to hell. You see them separated from bliss and peace and calm and given over to pain and anguish and degradation, forever. The world is created and comes forth in the formless void, and the angels are still in hell. The world rolls on around the sun its appointed number of times, and the devils are still in hell. The judgment day passes. Eternity sets in, sufferings uncounted, innumerable are endured, and the fallen angels are still in hell, to remain forever! Why? What changed bright angels into unseemly demons, what prepared an eternity of woe to the chosen ones of the adorable Trinity. Sin--mortal sin, one single mortal sin. Not a long course of crime, not a series of debaucheries, frauds, murders, lies, blasphemies, but one single sin of thought.

There is yet another spectacle of the effects of sin visible to the eye of faith. Let us go down into that prison from which the smoke of torment ascends forever and ever. There, shrieking with agony, are a great part of the human race. There are crowded and crushed together the proud, the ambitious, the sensual, all the enemies of God from the

beginning. There are the debased and corrupt generations that preceded the deluge; there are the nations who during the Jewish dispensation warred upon Israel; there are the multitudes and multitudes who since the time of Christ have fallen away from and persecuted His Church. There they are crushed together, shrieking and howling; and there will they remain, so long as God is God.

They shriek and lament and groan and gnash their teeth to teach us the frightful consequences of mortal sin. Beloved friends, we have grown familiar with sin. The earth is full of it, we see as we walk the street, we hear it in conversations, we read in newspapers, we witness it even in churches; and besotted with our foolish worldly thoughts and views, we think it as small matter; nay we dally with its occasions, we have it on our soul, and laugh and enjoy ourselves the while we have become accustomed and drink it down like water. But our thinking it a small matter does not make it small. While we are laughing at it the devils are writhing under everlasting penalty, the damned souls are struggling under weight of eternity, whose torments they ever feel to be the effect of their own free action.

If sin were a small matter, could a just, a wise, a merciful God hurl from their thrones of light his brightest and consign them to eternal torment, for one single sin of thought?

If sin were a small matter could God bring so many evils on this globe of ours for one single transgression? If sin were a small matter could God send a human soul redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ into everlasting punishment for the commission of but one?

The cause [the effect] must be always proportioned to the cause. When we see great cities rock to and fro, palaces falling, whole villages being swallowed up in the bowels of the earth, we say a great earthquake is at work, causing all the ruin. When we see the ocean lashed to fury and its waves strewn with wrecks, we say a great storm has aroused the deep.

So when we see in the gloomy prison of Hell, pure spirits shorn of their brightness, made hideous demons, human souls marked with the sign of the cross and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ shut out from the light of God's smile forever, and are told that this was the effect of mortal sin, we ought to say, then, is mortal sin a terrible, an immense, an unspeakable evil. We talk of and shrink from the evils of poverty, of persecution, loss of friends and the like; but these are evils that pass. But the sin--that name of God spoken but once in vain, the impure thought deliberately consented to--the transaction completed, is an evil that remains for ever and ever, that does not afflict but destroys us, that does not bow us down but crushes us, through eternity.

Oh awful, incomprehensible, justice of God! that spared not the angels, but hurled them from heaven, that spares not man, but turns away into everlasting torment,

that spared not the Son of God but let Him die upon the cross for sin. Terrific eternity, on whose verge we tremblingly stand! witness, in the throes of the wicked, of the fathomless malice of mortal sin! As often as I think of it I recoil, I close my eyes and my brain reels, in attempting to measure its depths to follow its duration. Yet it is true: through eternity thousands and millions created for happiness must suffer for mortal sin, suffer justly at the hands of a wise and merciful and holy God.

Now if such a monster be sin in its effects, what is it in itself? What can there be in a word of blasphemy in an act of revenge, in a look of impurity, in a thought crime so malicious as to merit a chastisement so unspeakably great? Give me your attention, while I attempt to disclose the nature of mortal sin, and be assured that with all my explanations and all your attention, we shall fall short of comprehending a malice that is in itself incomprehensible.

Sin is a turning away of the free will from God and adhering to creatures. Natural reason teaches us that though God was free to create or not to create us as He pleased, yet having created us He could create us for no other end but Himself. Our reason never stops investigating, until it arrives at the first great cause, and our insatiable longing after what is good can repose only in the Infinite Good. When Adam had breathed into him the breath of life, and found himself existing in the garden, the first motion of his understanding was to know that God had made him, and the first desire of his heart was to find out what God had made him for, in order that he might do it. As he looked around upon the glorious Paradise in which he was created, and his eye feasted on the endless beauty of flowers and groves and fountains and lakes, and saw them swarming with living creatures, in countless variety, his first impulse was to adore the hand that formed them and him, and with his head bowed to the ground to protest his readiness to execute the will of the creator. "Great, omnipotent, all wise Creator!" he exclaimed. "Behold the dust Thou hast formed, say Thy will in forming it. Behold the reason Thou hast made, say how I shall use it. Behold the will I possess from Thee, say what I shall love with it."

So, beloved friends, ought each one of us to exclaim. A few years ago we were not, we were less than clay in the hands of a potter. God was free to make us or not make us, to make us one thing or another. He chose to form us unto honor. Therefore God has the same absolute claim on our services, which [He] had upon the services of our forefather Adam. He is the absolute master of all us, of our will, understanding, memory, body, as He is the maker of all.

Our dependence on Him extends farther; not only are we absolutely dependent on Him in our origin, but also in each moment of our life, each breath we draw, each thought we think, each word we utter is in virtue of a gift of His, then and there conferred.

Yet with all this absolute dependence on God it was necessary to fulfill our

destiny that we should have free will. We are free to acknowledge our dependence on Him or not acknowledge it; we are free to love or not to love Him. He has placed before [us] fire and water, and to whichsoever we will we are free to stretch forth our hand.

Now in view of this absolute dependence of our whole being on God, consider the turpitude of our malice when we turn away from [Him] to creatures. How unspeakably loathsome is the pride of our rebellion in sin. Depending on Him absolutely, in all things, we seek to cast off the yoke of his authority, and vile worms that we are, dare to array ourselves in hostility with the great God of the universe. Thou shalt not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God commanded Adam. I will eat of the tree, said Adam when the serpent had entered his heart. Thou shalt not kill, nor commit adultery, nor steal nor bear false witness, God commands by His law, and "we will steal and kill, and revel in corruption, and bear false witness and covet," we answer by the defiant voice of our multiplied crimes. We cast of the yoke and say, "I will not serve;" and like Pharaoh of old, when the voice of God comes in to cross our purposes, and command to desist from the pursuit of our gratifications, we say, "Who is God, that I should serve Him? I know not God." We protest by our actions that we know Him not. God holds us in His hand, as it were suspended, over the abyss of nothingness whence He drew and were He to let us go, we should immediately fall, and be swallowed up, and we by sin do all in our power to lacerate the hand that sustains us, to insult the majesty of Him to Whose bounty we are clinging for life.

God knew what He made us for, He gave us His law as our guide; and when we refuse to be guided by Him, or to acknowledge Him as our master [sentence incomplete]

Pride, foolish, base, loathsome, pride is the root of the malice of mortal sin. Pride alone would be a sufficient reason why God should detest and punish eternally mortal [sin]. Pride makes the heart turn away from God, and when the heart refuses to have anything to do with God, what else can God do but turn away from man.

2. Consider the contempt of God in mortal sin. God places before us his pleasure, his friendship, and all the good he is capable of bestowing.

The most bitter insult we can offer to a person is to show contempt. We cannot bear even kindness, if it is mingled with contempt, and the most cutting outrage on our feelings is the preferring of unworthy persons to us.

Now when we sin we make a deliberate choice. We know that by mortal sin we forfeit the friendship of God. We have placed therefore on one side the friendship of God, His grace and His heaven, and on the other side the acquisition of some trifling gain, the attainment of some little honor, the gratification of some filthy passion. And with deliberate malignity we give the go-by to God, and his friendship, and take up with the passion, the gain. We are struck with horror at the stupidity of the Jews' "Release not this man to us but Barabbas," not Jesus Christ but the robber. We are

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astonished at the malice of Judas, who thought 30 pieces of silver [end of manuscript]

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Sermon, Book 2, No. 20

The Prodigal Son

There is wonderful depth and accuracy of meaning in all the parables of our Lord, but the one of the Prodigal Son seems to surpass all. I will first lay before you its literal meaning, and then its spiritual application.

The story in its first and second scenes, at least, is a common one--one which few of us have not seen repeated in our experience. A kind father and a willful son, a breaking up of home, the ruin and want of the disobedient child, these are everyday affairs. The scene of repentance and return is unfortunately not so common, for generally the wreck of the son comes back to the grave of the father.

The younger of two sons of a wealthy father grows weary of the monotony and restraint of home. He has seen enough of peace, of morning and evening prayers and regular hours and courtesy and gentle breeding, and ready but formal attendance. He wants freedom. So he says, "Father, I believe you intend to make some kind of a division of property between myself and my brother. Just give me my share now and let us have done with it." The father complies. He sets aside what he intends for his youngest born and shows it to him. The petulant son gathers it up and goes away; and the first scene closes.

The second scene is in a far country. It is one of extravagance and riot, which soon closes in the bankruptcy of its principal. He grows poor, his flatterers forsake him, and through sheer hunger he is obliged to hire himself out to be a swineherd. He may have felt the degradation but he felt hunger more. And so he followed the swine and starved amongst them.

But as he leaned upon his stick a thought struck him. What a state am I reduced to! The servants in my father's house are well clothed and fed, and here I starve. My friends have deserted me, the man I serve does not care for me. I will arise and go to my father. I cannot stay here. I cannot apply to my employer for food. I cannot seek out the companions and feeders of my riots. I know not what my father will say, but to whom else can I go if not to him? I will arise and go to him. So he arose and went and the father saw him from afar, and met him and forgave him and restored him to his old place with merry-making and joy.

This is the figure of every soul that, having once had the grace of God, has sinned.

While we had grace we dwelt in God's house. When we were baptized, when we made a good Confession and Communion, when we resolved to live for God and for

eternity we lived for the time in the palace of the great king--our Father. We sat at His table, went in and out in His presence. The angels were our associates, the Mother of God ministered to us. We were clothed in white garments; and whatever we needed for enjoyment or utility, we had for the asking. Did we need companionship? The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost came to us and dwelt with us. Did we need sympathy? We have a high priest who having been tempted on all sides could compassionate our infirmities. Did we need strength to resist temptation, to drive away sorrow, we had our guardian angel and his bright associates, and Mary Queen of Angels at hand. There was nothing true and good and beautiful that was not ours.

But when temptation came upon us and perversity entrapped us we grew weary of restraint, and we said to God, "Father give me whatever You intend for me, now, for I am going to bid You and Your house goodbye. I am tired of it and I wish to go." Now let us consider in this more minutely the application of the parable. Strictly speaking no man has any share of the Father's property. Whatever we have, whether of nature or grace, is God's free gift. Nevertheless there are certain things we lose, when we sin, and certain things we retain. The things we lose belong to God's house: His friendship, the companionship of the angels, the heirship of heaven; and are supernatural gifts. The things we retain are gifts on nature, such as natural talent and health.

These are the capital on which a course of sin is ordinarily begun: some portion of intellect, health, capacity for animal enjoyment, and trust in the bright promises of the sensual world.

Gathering these together the soul leaves its Father's house. What a sad leave-taking. Who that has sinned does not remember it? What Catholic soul cannot recall some sunny spot in its existence when it feared sin and dwelt in God's house. Perhaps the time was some bright morning long ago when the boys and girls came trooping to church to make their first Communion; or farther back still when prayers were lisped by a mother's knee--but there was such a time for everyone. Then afterward the fear of God slowly melted away in the soul. The horror of sin was blunted, the mind was turned from good, and the fascination of emptiness obscured what was good, and at last gathering around its natural desires, its love of pleasure, of ease, of honor, its health and time, it took leave of God and sinned.

The course of sin once commenced, how wildly it was kept up.

The prodigal is not said to have adopted any particular course of extravagance but to have wasted his substance in riotous living. So the soul once plunged in sin without order or system simply wastes its substance.

Let us dwell on this thought until we see its force. Without speaking of the havoc which gluttony, impurity, and such sins make of one's health, comeliness, fortune, reputation in society, how they waste one's temporal substance, and make him an outcast in society and a burthen to himself, let us take a higher and more general

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view, and see how that subtler and sublimer substance of the soul is wasted by sin. Undoubtedly the highest power of the soul is its capacity for enjoyment. It is above the affections and the understanding, because we understand and love only to enjoy. Now this capacity for enjoyment is taken away by sin. The goods of this world, the incentives to sin, are not made to satisfy the soul. They delight us only in proportion as they deceive us. But as we come in close contact with them, and have experience of them, we discover their true nature and they can deceive us no longer. Therefore they can delight us no longer. The process of losing all taste for earthly pleasures may be longer or shorter according to the amount of mind in the one who tries the experiment, and to the energy with which he gives himself up to them; but it requires no time at all to convince any one of the emptiness of the enjoyments he has had.

Sometimes we deceive ourselves with the thought that although what worldly pleasure we have had was quite unsatisfactory, yet there are others we might have that would give us peace. Thus the avaricious man who finds no peace in his wealth thinks there would be peace in more of it. The ambitious man who is irritated and worn with the cares of a small office thinks the trouble arises from its not being a larger one. The glutton groaning under a surfeit looks forward for relief to the new indulgence. And in general, a man does find less enjoyment at every fresh excess; the stronger his habit becomes, the less is his enjoyment of it. The first indulgence of appetite in eating or drinking has a pleasure in it which is soon lost by gluttony. The first time one goes to a theatre it has a wonderful fascination and enchantment. So of all habits. The more the act is repeated the less it is enjoyed until at last when the habit is firmly fixed the enjoyment is gone. Solomon when he had sated every passion, rioted in every meadow, and plucked flowers on every heath, when he had had unlimited honor for his wisdom, power, and wealth as king, pleasure as one to whom nothing could be denied, sat down and wrote all is vain. In our fast day and country we find boys of nineteen and women of twenty who declare that they have gone the whole round of earthly excitements and pursuits, and can find delight in nothing; and though we may smile at their affectation we have reason to tremble at a truth they suggest, that there is a condition of the soul in which it sins without taking any pleasure in sin. There are men who blaspheme God without ever the intention of adding horrible emphasis to their discourse. There are men who inebriate themselves, while they loathe each new portion of the poison that maddens them. There are some who take revenge by calumny, harshness, and injustice on those against whom they have no spite; others who defraud to accumulate money they do not want; others who spend nights in debaucheries their soul loathes. The capacity for enjoyment becomes wasted in time, and the soul sits down, amid the ruins, and like the prodigal son exclaims, "I die of hunger."

Oh from how many a heart that the world calls happy arises this desolate dry, the cry of the heart that burns with inextinguishable thirst after what is truly good, true,

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and beautiful, and has never known but presence, hollowness, and tinsel. It is chokingly breathed, in the glare of festive lights and the swelling of voluptuous music, from asking hearts that are hidden beneath smiling faces; it is uttered in splendid homes, where want never entered. The soul sits down and considers the whole round of guilty pleasure, vain excitements, and hollow honors at its command and turning from them with loathing exclaims, "I die of hunger!"

Yet the mind must have excitement and action, and so the wearied soul plunges again into the round of its loathed pleasures, it tries to taste. It would feed its hunger on husks, but it cannot find nourishment in them. Truly then does the will, the power of choosing between good and evil, become a keeper of swine, the mere tender of a herd of unclean passions. Habits of indulgence have grown into a necessity; a caprice is no sooner felt than it must be gratified, and be the passion what it may the will cannot say no to it. The soul that was once clothed in brightness, was dear to God, companion of the angels, and inmate of the King's palace, is thus sunk to become the slave of vile and brutal passions, keeper of swine.

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Sermon, *The Catholic Telegraph*, November 25, 1869

Sermon at the Jubilee in Steubenville, November 2, 1869

[The Blindness of the Sinner]

(synopsis)

The solemn exercises of the Jubilee were opened in our church on Tuesday evening, the 2d inst., by our Right Rev. Bishop, who delivered an excellent sermon on the occasion from the text: "Lord, that I may see." In a parable which he drew, he showed how the sinner was in the same condition as the blind man spoken of in the Gospel who was deprived of his natural sight, and whose only desire was that he should see. In like manner it should be the sinner's desire that he might see how he had become blind by forsaking the path of God's law and becoming the slave of his greatest enemy, and seeing thus, would fly from sin and return to the service of his Lord.

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Sermon, Book 2, No. 3

(Third Sunday of Lent, 1855)

[Moral Relapse]

(incomplete)

No gift that God confers on us in this life is equal to that sweetness, and calm, with which He fills the soul at the moment it renounces the world, the flesh, and the devil; to love and serve thenceforward only Him. His grace enlightens the understanding to see that all beside Him is worthless, and inflames the will to despise all worldly things and cleave to Him alone; and in that knowledge and love the soul is thrilled with unspeakable joy, it tastes the peace of God that passes understanding, and is in a delirium of delight. In the brightness of that light, with [which] God fills it, the soul beholds a great world it knew not of before, so grand and beautiful as to make it quite despise the world it knew before. Away down in its own depths, it finds the path of an interior life, a path round which, as time goes by, the affections may be fixed, its thoughts occupied. That path, it seems, is hidden from the coarse, sensual world, but is in sight ever of God and his angels. To the coarse, sensual world it seems a thorny path, but, indeed, it is a path of pleasure. To the world it seems dark, but in reality a sunlight from the invisible world is ever streaming over it. To the world it seems lonely, but there are angel greetings thick and fast for the traveler on it, and the Great God Himself dwells ever on it. So the soul, transported by the fervor of new vision and new love, exclaims with Peter on the Mount, it is good to be here; or with the royal prophet, "How lovely are Thy dwellings O Lord of Hosts!" and is overpowered with a sweet and rapturous ecstasy.

Beloved friends, how many of you have felt this peace and fondly dreamed it would last forever?

Recall to mind, you that came tardily into the Church, that fervor of the first days of your conversion, the indifference you felt about the good and evil of the world, the spontaneous reverence with which you assisted at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the eagerness with which you panted to convert the whole world to Christ; recall the peace that filled your heart to overflowing in those happy [days].

Recall to mind, you that were baptized in infancy and under the shadow of the altar, the time when God first illuminated you. The memory may bring with it the image of some dim-lit chapel of a college or a convent, of some May altar set up by childish hands to the Virgin Mother, of some venerated priest, the pastor of your early years, of the sanctuary at whose railing you knelt trembling and subdued, to receive for the first time the Bread of Life, seen through the vista of the troubled past, and you will remember all the better by the aid of these half-forgotten objects the peace, the

tranquility, the unutterable joy that then inundated your soul.

Happy, happy days! The remembrance will cause each to exclaim, "Would it had been the will of God, then to take me to Himself! Would that He had been pleased to close my eyes in death, ere I opened them to sin! Would that from the calm sweet light His grace had diffused down my soul, He had taken [me] to where the light of His glory illumines the saints forever!"

We may well regret, beloved friends, the loss of our first ardor, as we regret the loss of our first innocence, in falling back into sin, after those days of peace, for so doing we have rendered our return difficult, our thorough reform doubtful, our final salvation uncertain; our only chance of safety is to appreciate our danger at its true value, to regret wisely our loss, and to set ourselves with prudence and energy about repairing the damage we have sustained.

We have sinned after being illuminated, knowingly, willfully, maliciously sinned, and by sinning we have lost the fruit of God's graces, and our own good works. Our heart, in the springtime of its innocence, drank in the gentle rain of God's holy graces, showered on us through the sacraments, and has remained fruitless and sterile. Instead of finding ourselves more humble, more devout, more detached from the world, more prepared for death than we were then, we are wedded more than ever to the world, more than ever inclined to live as though there were no God to love in the universe! We have lost the sweetness of our first love, we have lost the fervor of our former Communion, we have lost the purity of our former intention, we have gone astray and acted iniquitously through our own fault. After keeping the unclean spirit of pride and human respect and sensuality out of our hearts, for a while, we have let him return with seven other spirits more unclean than he, to find in our soul a dwelling place swept and garnished. And our last state is worse than our first.

It is impossible, says St. Paul, Heb. VII, for those who have been once illuminated, have tasted the celestial gift, have been once partakers of the Holy Ghost, and fallen away, to be renewed unto penance. You hear the sentence of the Holy Ghost pronounced of all those who have been inconstant in the service of God! Their salvation is impossible, they are as if they were in hell already.

Beloved friends, as many of us are Catholic we have been illuminated by a light from God in which we saw the vanity of the world, the terror of the Judgment, the hatefulness of sin, and that light is now quenched in darkness. We tasted the celestial gift, the Holy of Holies rested upon our tongue, since polluted by unchaste discourse, and nestled fondly in our heart, since defiled with abominable desires.

We were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. He came to us at the imposition of the bishop's hands, and made his temple, and we have since driven him away, and trampled on his seven-fold gifts. And now our salvation is so difficult as to be called impossible.

It is impossible for those who have been once illuminated, have tasted the celestial gift and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and fallen away, to be renewed in penance.

Yes, let those who have relaxed their former fervor, those who in their next Confession will have to unfold the same mortal sins which in their last they confessed, those who have done what they knew to be wrong, those while professing to hold Catholic faith have trampled upon Catholic morality, understand the proposition predicated of them by the Holy Ghost--their salvation is, morally speaking, impossible. Yet this impossibility of salvation is not an absolute one. It comes not from any other cause but their own free will. It would be asserting heresy to say that the Blood of Christ is not amply sufficient to purchase pardon for any sin however enormous, or that the keys of the Church will not unlock the gates of heaven to any sinner however wicked. That the salvation of the inconstant is impossible comes not from God's unwillingness to grant pardon but from his [the sinner's] unwillingness to seek it. On God's part, as long as there is life, there is hope; the hopelessness of the sinner's case comes from the sinner's will. The salvation of those who have sinned against light is not absolutely impossible, but only extremely difficult.

So it is not absolutely impossible for a child raised in the midst of bad example to love virtue and live an honest life, but it is so difficult that everyone esteems it utterly improbable. It is not impossible that a drunkard, who has taken and broken the pledge a dozen times, [will] leave off drinking and become a sober man, but no one ever expects it. It is not impossible for men and women abandoned to the abominable vice of impurity, [to] turn to God and lead good penitent lives, but who ever sees them do it? So it is not impossible for us, who have abandoned the fervor of our first illumination, who have wittingly strayed, to return to the old paths; but it is difficult, it is hardly to be expected. History is full of warning on this point. For one Magdalen that repented, we find a million who passed away to the grave in despair. For one Berengarius that retracted his heresy we find a thousand Luthers, going down into their dishonored tombs, in the delirium of their sins, without an attempt at repentance. History, experience, demonstrate with terrible clearness that those who sin against light, who rise and fall and repent and relapse, do not return, do not die in the grace of God, are lost.

There are three reasons of this which I pray you to mark well in order that the difficulty of salvation may terrify but not discourage those who have relapsed again and again into the same mortal sins.

These three reasons are indicated by the Apostle. The relapsed sinner loses the power of being moved by his knowledge, he loses the desire to try to do right and act prudently, he loses the graces of the Holy Ghost. Once illuminated, once having tasted the celestial gift, once partaker of the Holy Ghost, he is now filled with that light, that

celestial sweetness, that affluence of divine grace again.

1. The relapsed sinner losses the power of being moved by his perception of what is his interest. Our soul being rational must be moved by reason clear[ly] seen. In fact, if we recall the time when we were fervent we will see that it was our clear perception of the immortality of our soul, of our accountability to God, of the certainty of death, of the rigor of the judgment, of the terror of hell, the love of heaven, the claims God has upon our services, that inspired us with such contempt of the world, such a fear of sin, such love of God, such a desire of serving Him alone. When we saw these for the first time we were astonished at the sight; we saw that before we had been wrong and we wondered at our blindness, and the blindness of our neighbors. But after we had grown cold and fallen into sin again, we did not fear death and hell and judgment so much, and the loveliness of God called up no throb in our bosoms any more. Drawn on by our evil inclinations, we sinned in the midst of the light, and darkness gathered over us.

The force of habit is the same in this, as in all other matters. Persons accustomed to early rising, will start from sleep at the first gleam of morning light that comes peeping through their windows, while those used to indulge in more sleep will not be roused even by the broad glare of the morning sun. So the first rays of grace that showed us whither sin was leading startled us from the sleep of death; but that start once over and disregarded, we sleep in sin in the full blaze of faith, and laugh while our soul is in mortal sin and at enmity with God.

I have known persons, who on first coming from the country to the city would start at every fire bell, and rush to their window to see if the flames were in their vicinity; and who after a few months would sleep quietly amid the din of all the bells in the city, the clatter of the engines, the shouts of the spectators, and be surprised to read in the morning papers that half the block on which they were sleeping was burned to the ground.

So when we first heard the alarm of the eternal fire when we first reflected on our chances of going into exterior darkness, with weeping and gnashing of our teeth, we drew back shuddering, and recoiled from sin that might bring upon us so awful a calamity. But after that first shudder, when in spite of what we knew we sinned again, we felt no such fear any more. We can sit tranquilly under the preaching of the most terrible truths and admire or criticize the style and thought of the preacher as though he were describing the end and destiny of a people away off, on another planet. We can follow to the grave those who die and not think that others may soon be following us there. We can see the friends of our youth dropping off around us like blighted flowers, and say poor creatures or sudden death, as though we were not soon to join them. What will recall us to God? Once we hated sin when we first knew its deformity, but what knowledge should make us hate it, after we have turned to it, knowing its

deformity? God can send us no new consideration, how then shall He convert us?

First obstacle in the way of our salvation that we were once illuminated, that we have sinned with our eyes open and cannot be moved by the knowledge we have of the evils of sin.

[2.] The second obstacle to the inconstant man's salvation is hardness of heart and carelessness about acting prudently.

God has placed in our natural heart a love of right and a hatred of wrong. Hence whenever our memory accuses us of having done what we knew to be wrong, we are pained with a sense of degradation and folly in yielding to our brutal appetite. Hence the shame that children and persons not accustomed to self-analysis feel at making known their sins to others. Hence the efforts that men always make to persuade themselves that what they want to do is right, either before they do it or while they are doing it. Hence the eagerness with which persons out of the Catholic Church catch up every sophism and calumny and vituperation uttered against the Church they do not want to yield to; trying to soothe their uneasy consciences that are ever whispering to investigate calmly and inquire earnestly into the claims of that extraordinary body, whose claims to be the true Church are rendered so startlingly respectable by her venerable antiquity, the universality of her existence, the holiness of her doctrine, the perplexing yet undeniable evidence of her unshattered unity; striving, I say, to soothe their consciences and remain in peace, in the honored and popular religion in which they were brought up.

This love of rectitude, and shame of wrong, is blunted and dulled by being often disregarded, as it must be disregarded by him who falls afresh into sin after having tasted the sweets of innocence. The oftener we yield to passion, the less we care whether what we do is right or wrong. Hence there is a very old proverb that the greater the saint, when he is well disposed, the blacker the sinner if he fall, of whose truth you know but too many illustrations. If a man sins once he does not lose his love of right in general. But when he sins and repents, sins and repents, he loses all love for right, not only in the particular points in which passion urges him to wrong, but in all points and in all forms. This is the reason, of the monstrous malignity of men who from being devout and good change to be bad. This is the reason why apostate priests and religious such as Luther, Achilli, and Gavazze, are not content with leading a life of ordinary crime, but toil ten times harder than they would have been obliged to toil to save their souls, to corrupt the minds and hearts of men by obscenity and calumny, exhibiting often and often a malice that seems to show them to love evil not for its profits but for itself.

On a certain occasion, long ago, a man was proposing atheistical views, to a group of passengers on the deck of a steamboat. He did not believe in the immortality of the soul, in the judgment, in heaven or hell at all, and moreover, he declared, he did

not think anyone else did. Now, said he, if any man really believed that he was in danger of being sent to hell, for all eternity, what a fidget he would be in all the time, and what care he would take to keep out. "Why, if I believed, I would be willing [to] stand cold water up to my neck, for twenty years, yes for a hundred years, if I thought that, by so doing I could gain happiness and escape misery for all eternity!" In saying he would act thus, the atheist betrayed a proud ignorance of his poor human heart but he expressed what everyone in the bright sweet light of his first illumination is ready to acknowledge.

Yet by a habit of sin, we blunt this love of right, this desire to act prudently and to provide for the future; and believing as we do most firmly that death, judgment, heaven and hell are awaiting us, we do not care to prepare for them, at all. Not long ago it was related in the papers as an amusing anecdote, that a certain politician was angrily reproached by one of his supporters for casting his vote contrary to his promises. You promised to vote the other way, said his former friend bitterly. "Well what if I did?" was his cool reply. "Then you violated your pledge and told base falsehood." "Well, what if I did?" was still the placid response. Something like this occurs in the soul of the person whose moral sense has been blunted by repeatedly sinning.

By remaining in that state, by frequenting that occasion, by continuing in that habit, the priest from the pulpit, the confessor, the word of God, [and] his own conscience conspire warningly to say, you are in certain danger of losing your soul forever. And the stupid sin-besotted heart sluggishly answers, "What if I am?"

"But," urge the God-sent monitors, "you will lose heaven for which you were created in Baptism, and be shut forever out from its delights, its glory, its happy company." And the unmoved heart responds, "What if I do?"

"But you are losing the grace of your Baptism, of your Communion, you are outraging your kindest and best benefactor, your most faithful friend, the infinitely amiable God!" And the heart sunk in the filth of its sensual or avaricious or ambitious affections and designs answers, "What if I do?"

As a last resort the advocates of salvation say to the guilty soul, "But you are trampling on the blood of Jesus Christ, that bought you. Look at Him on the cross, bearing up the sins of the world. See the blood streaming from his lacerated hands and feet and brow! Read on that ensanguined brow, in the writhing of that godlike face, that agony that is tearing the soul within. All that agony is endured by the Son of God, your creator and judge, your redeemer and father, for your sins, and if you sin again you mock that agony." And the soul degraded by repeated falling into sin answers, "No matter, I will sin."

Yes, beloved friends, our dullness of heart comes to this, that we mock the Savior's agony and trample on His blood without remorse.

"I must amass wealth, says the heart that has given way to avarice, and if to get rich I must desert my faith, vituperate the Church of God, even sell my God like Judas--no matter.

"I must on in my career of ambition," says the proud heart, "although each step of my progress I plant my heel on my Savior's thorny crown to drive deeper and deeper sharp points into His temples.

"I must satisfy my appetites," says the sensual heart, "no matter if each sin is vinegar and gall on the parched lips of the dying Son of God."

Yes, yes, beloved friends, it comes to this--that men look with dry eyes on a crucifix, and feel no throbbing in their hearts when they think of Jesus at all. Nay, that they will not to please Him abstain from one single sin. What will convert hearts like these? You need not argue with [them] to show that they are wrong, for they know that already. What can convert them? What cord of their heart is left to touch, what feeling to appeal to, what desire to stimulate, what hope to arouse? None. None. You have no sound spot to strike on, but from the crown of the head to the soul of the foot, there is only wound above wound, putridity above putridity.

The second obstacle to the conversion of the inconstant is general disregard of right, general carelessness about

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259.

Lecture, *The Catholic Columbian*, December 11, 1875

This series titled "Lecture in St. Joseph's Cathedral" was unsigned, incomplete, and poorly edited. But we are sure Bishop Rosecrans was the speaker, for on the first page of the December 11 issue is the notice, "The Bishop's lectures at the Cathedral Sunday evenings, draw appreciative audiences." The Sunday prior to its publication was December 5.

[The Want of Thought]

The want of thought is the great source of ruin to man. The earth is desolate because there is no one who thinks in his heart. We blame children when they idle away their time and forget their errands. Yet we do every day what we blame them for: idle our time away and forget the purpose for which God sent us into the world. We blame sea captains and railroad conductors, by whose carelessness and want of thought disasters occur by sea or land, yet disasters of the most frightful magnitude daily happen through that same carelessness and want of thought in the spiritual world. When extravagant people fail in business, we say they deserved ruin, and if they involve others in their downfall we sympathize with the curses heaped upon them.

Men say, "Oh I cannot have faith by wishing. I cannot be always wrapped up in

the concerns of piety. I have my living to make, my family to support, my business to attend to," and so soothing themselves, they pass on from excitement to excitement until death seizes them and astonishes them by disclosing all of a sudden to them that they had time for nothing else but that which they were always waiting leisure to attend to. We wonder how it was that the Jews could witness the wonderful works, especially the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and still refuse to believe in Him. We wonder also how non-Catholics can come in contact with the Catholic Church--in the history of her struggles with the world, in her marvelous Religious orders, in her many saints, in her unchanging unity from age to age and in varying climes and peoples--and deny that she is the work of the most high God. Yet we forget to wonder at ourselves that we can believe what we believe, and act as we act. Those two tablets which St. Augustine says will be placed before us in the Day of Judgment, the one showing our belief, the other our actions, are a perpetual contradiction with one another.

We believe that by Baptism we were made children of God--we live as if God was not our father but our enemy. We believe ourselves heirs of heaven--we live as if we cared for no heirship but of earthly things.

We believe our home is Eternity, but no pagans or infidels toil more eagerly, and worry more, over earthly honors. There is no vile and sordid pursuit of gain or power or pleasure known, in which those who live without God have not Catholics for rivals. Worse still, there is no sin of blasphemy, perjury, dishonesty, vengeance, drunkenness, impurity, sacrilege, which is not practiced by one or another of those whom Jesus Christ chose in Baptism, sealed in Confirmation, and made one with Himself in holy Communion.

Faith alone will not save us, but will condemn us to a deeper hell, if we refuse to heed it and follow it. There are two springs of action within us: passion which seeks the satisfaction of the present appetite; and understanding, which aims at substantial and enduring good. Passion would drink the pleasant cup, forgetful of the poison in it. Understanding would shiver the cup, and endure the thirst. Passion is not wickedness. The appetite does not hate God, or truth, or virtue, as the dark dogma of Luther and Calvin has it. It only loves its own gratification, thinking nothing of God. It is not wrong to do something *because* it pleases the appetite, but only wrong when the gratification is forbidden by God's law. Passions are the effect of the fall of man--not because the poison of sin so penetrated and corrupted them, that their every motion is hateful and abominable before God, but because, by the fall, human nature was deprived of that integrity; that subjection of the lower to the higher in it, with which it had been originally endowed. God does not hate us for being hungry but only when we gratify our hunger for its own sake, and become gluttonous. We do not offend Him by being thirsty, but we do offend Him when, to appease our thirst, we give ourselves to the will of intoxication. The desire for others' praise is no sin, but it becomes sin

when ambition tramples on the laws of justice to reach its ends. The craving after what will secure the necessities and comforts of life is in itself not forbidden. It becomes crime when greed stifles the love of justice and of mercy in the soul.

In itself, every passion, every natural feeling of the heart, is innocent. If controlled by right judgment it would never offend God.

The understanding, enlightened by faith, looks beyond the present, and beneath the appearances. The cravings of appetite come and go, but the real good of the soul endures forever. Judge not according to the appearance, says St. Paul, but judge just judgment. The just judgment of the goods and evils of life is that they are but means to bring about salvation, valueless in themselves, useful only as they help us to do God's will, and get to Heaven. To be rich or poor, sick or well, unknown or celebrated, high or low, is all one. It is the use we make of these states of life which alone is of importance.

Now, not to act as soon as we feel, not to eat and drink what pleases us, not to strike when we are angry, but to pause and consider how we are going to feel about it in eternity, [not] to follow impulse requires restraint, self-denial, mortification. Hence the characteristic of the Christian life is to carry the cross. "If any one will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross." "Carrying always in our bodies the mortification of Jesus," says St. Paul. That is the first duty of a Christian, to think upon what he does. The saddest case of want of thought is that of men who hold the language of religion, but have lost the sense of it. The Pharisees had the language of the law by heart, and all the time on their lips, but its meaning was so far from their minds that they crucified the Author of it. Non-Catholic sects about us deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, yet call themselves Christians. Infidels and free thinkers think themselves virtuous, because they feel no inclination to persecute others for religion's sake.

But Pharisees and sectarians and unbelievers are not alone in words whose sense they do not take in. Catholics do their share of deceiving themselves and others, also.

One instance, out of very many, will suffice. You believe--all Catholics believe--that God is not only present everywhere, but in a peculiar manner in every church. You believe that in yonder tabernacle dwells Jesus Christ, whole and entire, body and blood, soul and divinity. He is there with the strength of His omnipotence, the watchfulness of His all-searching knowledge, the splendor of His infallible glory, the terror of His justice, the awfulness of His sanctity, the tenderness of His immeasurable love. Now is your belief real to you when you come through that door?

Do you think, as conscious that He is "looking through the grating" into the secrets of your hearts? Are all other fancies and desires hushed in the one reflection, "I am here, face to face, with my maker, redeemer, judge, in His own house? His eye is watching me, His ear is listening to me, His thoughts are bent on me now."

When we visit some great man in his house, we arrange our dress, our carriage, what we will say, and how demean ourselves long before hand. Arrived at his dwelling

we drop every concern but that of conducting ourselves so as to satisfy him. We stand in his presence with all respect and attention, sitting down only when and where invited. We speak when called upon with measured tones and words carefully considered. Is it thus, my dear Christians, that you come into the House of God? Is the thought of the Master uppermost in your mind from the time you come in, until you go out? When a servant stands before his master, he is quite taken up with listening to or expecting commands. When a child is with its father or mother, it has no thought of any thing else but of the beloved face and voice. When a culprit is in the presence of the judge, he is busy revolving his actions and excuses all the time. When a beggar meets his benefactor, he is all intent on thanks for what he has had, and petitions for what he wants. When the lover gets an interview with his beloved, he is enthralled with the presence, and hours are counted a minutes while it lasts.

Have we the thought and demeanor of servants before our Master in the tabernacle? Do we consider Him our Father as we gaze upon the altar? Do we remember our sins and bewail them as rendering us unworthy to a seat or a kneeling place in the dwelling of our judge? Do we remain wrapt in the presence of our most loving, confiding and self-sacrificing friend and lover? Alas, we do not. We enter the temple of God with all our worldly thoughts running wild through our minds. As we pass through the door, our gait and carriage are bold and thoughtless. The subdued aspect and downcast eye, that people notice in us as we pass up the aisle, are our tribute not of respect to the God of the temple, but of bashfulness to the eyes of the congregation. It comes not from considering what we are, but how we appear. The little genuflection with which we salute the all holy One in the tabernacle rather indicates our deference to custom, than measures our adoration of the King of Kings.

The real interest we have in what is occurring at the Sunday's Mass appears more from the glances bestowed on our right and left at the persons present, than from the forced stare at the open prayer book, or the closed eyes and bowed head of customary duty at the Consecration.

What I want to do is not to reprove and blame, but to make clear our great and common fault, that hinders so many of us from being sincere and earnest Catholics, the fault of not thinking on what we do, and what we believe. We accept the faith, we believe it firmly, and glory in defending it, when it is assailed by sophisms and misrepresentation. We feel a glow of pleasure in being associated with the choice of earth, since Abel the Just down to the elect of our own times. But that is all. Our thoughts and aims are worldly, and our conversation is not in heaven.

The remedy for this disorder is not in one spasmodic resolution which will settle all disorder, and secure peace of mind to us, once for all. The Protestant delusion of a single "spell" of sorrow for sin, ending in a complete and lasting renovation, as people are said to have the small pox only once, has no countenance from Catholic teaching.

We cannot enter into the narrow gate by having a fit, but by striving. We cannot win the race to heaven but by running. We must work out our salvation in fear and trembling. We must prove our love for God, not by imagining that He has sealed us by sending us a spasm, but by keeping His commandments.

The remedy for our dreamy sentimentality is action. If we want to feel as we believe, we must first act as we believe. If we wait to feel inclined to doing before we do, we reject faith in God and take ourselves for an idol by the very fact. You would like to pray without distractions. Avoid then, the idle reading, and vain conversations, and frivolous amusements on which your thoughts are always wandering. If you want thoughts of devotion, hear discourses of devotion, and speak on subjects of edification.

But do not imagine the work to be done by filling your mind with devout thoughts and sentiments. Sentimental piety is often worse than no piety at all. Where one feels devout, and takes the credit to himself of being devout, bewailing the unhappy condition of other men, and demanding consideration for a thousand caprices under the pretext of their piety, making hourly meditation on the faults of others, as though each defect discovered in one's neighbor were a proof of the opposite virtue in one's self. Not those who say, "Lord, Lord, enter into the Kingdom of Heaven," those who do the will of God. There are two natures still within us when we resolve on a devout life; the higher, which feels its right of mastery, and the lower, which acknowledges that right, and shrinks only from the actual suffering of submission. This lower nature fears no suffering at a distance; it approves of self-sacrifice and even martyrdom; it glows over the example of those who have given up the treasures and joys of life for the sake of truth and justice and charity. It makes us imagine that we are already of the number of the saints and martyrs with whom we sympathize. And this all the easier while self-indulgence is discreet and within bounds of fashionable respectability. This feeling is the make-up of humanitarians and "patriots" all the world over. It is the religion of the anti-Catholic party everywhere. What other religion they have is ignorance and declared impiety. They but deceive themselves. They think they love liberty and truth and justice. Those who hate the Catholic Church cannot intelligently love truth or justice or liberty, for she is the foundation of all three in human society. Yet the humanitarians really think that they alone are struggling to benefit mankind, and that the Church with her hierarchy, her priests and sisters, is laboring in the cause of oppression. They speak of immolating themselves for the public good, but in practice never immolate the smallest of their conveniences or even luxuries. They weep for the down-trodden, but have no mercy on their own servants or on the poor man who happens to owe them something.

Any Catholic who lives in mortal sin holds pious sentiments in vain. His devout feelings and imaginings of hopes and aspirations, as a Christian, are self-delusions. His desires for the conversion of unbelievers and the exaltation of the Church are vain and

illusory.

260.

Editorial, reprinted in the *New Orleans Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*, May 27, 1877

[The Sunday Obligation]

The obligation of sanctifying the Sunday is not satisfied by those who hurry off to a Low Mass at an early hour, and be merely bodily present during the Holy Sacrifice, whilst thoughts of a day's leisure, frolicking and pleasure occupy the mind. This is so frequently the case that we shudder at the thought of so many persons, calling themselves good Catholics, who act in this manner. They imagine that being in the church during Mass, is *hearing* Mass, and that as soon as "church is out," they are at liberty to spend the day in any manner that pleasure or ease may dictate. We are not required to be praying always, in the way many understand "praying," but we can offer up our actions, thoughts and speech, for the honor and glory of God, and thus make them prayers. If we cannot submit them for the approval of Almighty God, we sin. The practice of spending a Sunday in a saloon, drinking and playing cards, cannot be done for the glory of God, and those who are guilty of such practice call down a curse unstead of a blessing. The young men, especially, are becoming more and more derelict of their duty in this respect. They are known and marked. We hope tht before it is too late they will fully comprehend the error of their ways, and avoid these stepping-stones that lead to their eternal damnation.

261.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, January 31, 1878 (2)

[Seeing Fault in Others]

It is an unfortunate and illogical habit of backbiters to imagine that the faults they see in others disclose corresponding virtues in themselves; that the more industriously they carp, the more conspicuous they make their own sanctity. The beam is seldom out of the eye that is looking for splinters in the eyes of others. Take away the virtues that spring from faith and are built up in the human heart by grace, and there is very little difference in the moral character of men. All are sinners. Diogenes tramples Plato's pride beneath his feet with a pride greater than Plato's, all the world over. There is often more guilt in elegant sins than in sins that are gross and unfashionable. The drunken ruffian who kicked and beat his wife to death the other day is a loathsome creature. But wherein is he worse than the fashionable gentleman who sent his wife to an early grave by neglect and infidelity? Would that their censors had half the virtues

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of the poor Irish laborers they vilify; half their sterling honesty, their resolute purpose of earning and not stealing a living.

262.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, Sept. 26, 1878 (2)

[The Evil of Speaking Evil]

Editor Catholic Columbian:

What kind of evil-speaking is a sin? May I not call a thief, a thief, a rascal, a rascal, without doing wrong? If the lady next door keeps an untidy house, or is a shrew and a gadabout, is it not lawful for me to say so? M.T.

Ans. Evil speaking may be telling lies of others and it may be telling the truth. Of course, telling lies of others is always a sin. There are three cases in which we may speak injurious truth of others.

1. To lessen the scandal of some great public wrong they may be doing. Thus Dr. Newman many years ago took the edge off from the denunciations of Achilli, the apostate, by hunting up his record and providing the truth of his own words. "You denounce yourself, alone, O Achilli. Your knowledge of priestly immorality begins and ends with yourself."

2. To have the wrong redressed and the fault checked. Thus to tell a parent, master, or teacher the wrong which those under their care are in the habit of doing is not only not wrong, but is very often a duty.

3. To warn persons against certain dangerous company. Thus if you have a friend who will only ask you, "Why?" when you say "look for that company," you have a right to recite facts, be they ever so discreditable to that company, in order to enforce your warning. Outside of these three cases all backbiting is sin.

263.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, July 16, 1853 (2)

Drunkenness--Its Remedy.

Drunkenness, in its last stage, is a mortal sin that destroys the life of the soul. Besides the moral turpitude of depriving the image of God of the use of reason--it contains in it also the seed of many other sins. Sins of anger, neglect of parental and conjugal duties, blasphemy, prodigality, breaking asunder of holy ties, public scandals are the common fruit of this vice.

Drunkenness, being a gross and indecent vice, and entailing on its unhappy victims temporal miseries without number, strikes even the world with horror. An ill-used wife, ragged and half starved children, a miserable hut of some family once

affluent, a bloated countenance of a man once fair, distorted with idiotic laughter or writhing with drunken anger--are things which strike on the external senses so as to move even the heartless sentimentalists to hatred of inebriation.

In the northern countries, especially in the British dominions and in the United States, where all liquors are fermented and often drugged, drunkenness is frightfully prevalent. It would be difficult to count the number of ruined families that fall under the personal observation of a single man. What is to stop it? What is to be its remedy?

It is obvious to the Catholic mind that it is to be dealt with as with other mortal sins. We do not form our views of it from sentimentalism. It is no worse than fornication, blasphemy, calumny, theft, fraud, gluttony, and the violation of the other commandments of God.

Now the mode of dealing with other mortal sins varies according as the sin affects the individual sinner alone, or God alone, or society.

When the sin does not go beyond its perpetrator, as in the case of all sins of thought and of some external but lonely sins, no earthly tribunal can institute a punishment or devise a preventative for such. The doctrine of a future judgment, in which all the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, declares the only remedy and the certain punishment of crimes whose only witness is God.

If the sin affect only God, without giving scandal or seducing men into error, God only can avenge it. If, finally, the sin affect society, the civil law can take cognizance of it, punish it, or adopt means for its prevention. But it can adopt means for its prevention only under that particular aspect in which it affects society. It has no right to aim at the radical extermination of the vice, but only of its public phases.

Now drunkenness is a vice which affects society only in the shape of breaches of the peace, fights, riots, &c. These therefore society has a right to repress by civil penalties, fines, imprisonments, &c. But beyond these, society may not go without trenching on individual liberty. Civil government cannot, without tyranny, make a law prescribing any of its members what he may drink and what he may not drink, any more than it can without tyranny prescribe what he may eat or wear. Almighty God, in the Old Law, made a distinction between clean and unclean meats; but that such a distinction should be obligatory the intervention of Divine Authority was necessary. No civil power could ever bind its subjects to abstain from any species of food or drink.

Hence the Maine Liquor Law, as enacted by an authority not competent in its sphere, even where it is passed, is never binding on the consciences of the people. It is a law purely *penal*, without any moral sanction. Therefore it cannot be the remedy for drunkenness. Some of its advocates concede that it will not prove an effectual remedy. "But," they say, "it will be *some* remedy." They ought to reflect first that it is not a lawful remedy, and therefore may not lawfully be applied. Cutting the throats of all drunkards would be a much more effectual remedy; but no one proposes *that*. Neither ought they

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then to propose any other tyrannical remedy. The only effectual and radical remedy for drunkenness is the Christian doctrine--that every man shall be judged according to his works. When "St. Paul reasoned" before Felix, "of justice of chastity and of the judgment to come, Felix trembled." Only the thought of the judgment will chill the heart that is burning with the fires of sensual desire, and make it turn from the material good it coveted. Civil laws will be trampled under foot; but the law of God will prevail.

264.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, June 13, 1878

[Fortune Telling]

It is hard to get up an argument against the sin of going to fortune tellers that will tell on the minds of the present age. There is no doubt of its being a sin, as it is forbidden by the First Commandment. But that only acts as an allurement to certain young and foolish people. They think it a sin, but not a great one; and the curiosity to hear what some imposter may make themselves say, overcomes them. They listen to him telling them that they are human beings, with amazement. How could he know that? They have love-sick feelings. They have sick stomach sometimes. They have known toothache. They have a love affair on their minds. He has dark hair, and winsome ways. She has auburn locks, and is very engaging. Good gracious! how could the gypsy know all that? What is going to happen to me? All knowledge of what is going to happen to particular persons must be gained from almighty God or from the devil. If from God, it must be gained by prayer, and not through charms, incantations and gypsies. Let those who despise God go to the fortune teller.

265.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, December 30, 1876 (2)

[The Poverty of Pride]

It is the common thought that pride and riches go together. We would not quarrel with the common thought if it added, "So do pride and poverty go together." For pride goes wherever the human heart, unsubdued by the charity of Christ, goes. The sublimest pride is that which denies its own existence, and makes its owner say, "I may seem proud to you, sir; but I am not. I claim much for my talents, my judgment, my rectitude, my physical, mental and moral excellences. Of course, I do. But not more than is due to them. No, sir. On the contrary, less." These are the men who think every defect in their neighbors a good quality in themselves; who "trample Plato's pride with a huger pride than Plato's." Nothing but the sound of the Archangel's trumpet will

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awake these men to a sense of their own littleness. And then how exceedingly little they will appear!

266.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, June 17, 1876 (3)

The Use of Money

How common is the wish to be rich, in the hearts of those who credit themselves with charitable intentions! They would be so glad to aid in works of piety and charity, and would be so liberal if they had the means! The road to hell is paved with good intentions, and not the fewest of good intentions are those of being liberal and generous after a while when the means have been accumulated. What good can money do more than furnish good lodging and clothing? It can give nothing more than warmth, shelter, food, and a monument. "The things thou hast put together--whose shall they be?" The reason why it is hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven is not because it is a sin to be rich, but because the possession of riches blinds a man to the perception of their true use. They are of use only to fit their owner for the final judgments. He who has them is not their owner but the steward of them. To spend them in works of mercy and of piety, after the claims of justice are satisfied, is to apply them directly to the end for which they were bestowed. To hold and hoard them is to leave them idle and be in danger of the sentence of the unprofitable servant.

Our observation testifies that money-making people with difficulty preserve even their faith in their religion, in a general way, as being a good thing when the world fails. As for believing in the Christianity, every day, they do not dream of it. Tell them in any other words, but those of the Gospel, about the poor and the meek and the reviled and the persecuted being specially favored among men, and they would count you insane. They look upon all that is said, in the Gospel and in the pulpit, of the day's riches and the advantages of almsgiving and of Evangelical poverty, as so much unmeaning sentiment; and cling tenaciously to the belief that their own wit and industry made them prosper, that their prosperity gives them the right to attach that value to themselves which wealth can always exact from adulation. The number of Catholics who appreciate the value of money is very small.

267.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, Oct. 10, 1878 (2)

[The Poor in Mouth]

In every congregation there are two kinds of poor people, to wit: the poor in pocket, and the poor in mouth. The poor in pocket are the priest, the school teachers,

and a large part of the people. The poor in mouth are those who have begun to prosper and accumulate. Those immediately serving the Church are generally satisfied if they are allowed to live. They give their labor of mind and body cheerfully for God's honor and take His word for their pay as coming after death. Priests usually do not "lay up for the rainy day," because, taught by experience, they do not expect to live till it comes. Between them and the "poor mouths" there is a gulf, daily widening in this money-loving country. They have to teach that the only use of money after the wants of nature are supplied is to spend it for God's honor, or His poor, or on His Church; and the "poor in mouth" hoot at them as unpractical. "We want an altar" the priest says, "You could get it with the profits of a single week." "I will give ten cents" is the reply, "and if all the others give as much it will suffice." Or, "I will subscribe a dollar, but no more because I want to buy that house and lot to speculate upon them." This class of people do not sympathize with Catholic enterprises. New churches, new schools, orphan asylums, the splendor of God's worship in the churches, the very Sacraments themselves, are a burthen to them. Many of them do not have a Mass celebrated for their dead friends and relatives, or for their living ones, or themselves from one year's end to another. They strain not to lay up treasures in heaven, but to keep from laying them up there. They spend on themselves freely, but make wry faces at giving the price of a glass of beer to God. These are the men who alienate themselves from the spirit of the Church, and originate communism. Better for them if the revolution should fall upon them--for in losing their goods they might lose their avarice. Otherwise when they are snatched from their goods, the judgment of God will fall upon them and "grind them to powder."

268.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, January 30, 1875 (2)

Support of Pastors and Divine Worship [and Errors of the Pride of Wealth]

One of the commands of the Church is to pay tithes to our pastors: that is, to contribute a liberal share of what wealth God bestows on us to the support of our clergy and the maintenance of divine worship.

This command binds under mortal sin. Those who neglect and despise it cannot hope for salvation, though in other things they were as blameless as John the Baptist. Priests have a delicacy in explaining and insisting on this obligation, because they shrink from laying themselves open to the imputation of sordid motives, and because they can usually rely upon a more generous support by appealing to the sympathy of their people than to their sense of duty. Most men will give ten times for impulse where they give one for conscience. Still consciences must not be allowed to remain in ignorance, and Catholics must not grow into the pagan and Protestant habit of looking

upon their clergy as genteel paupers, hired lecturers, dependent on the bounty of those to whom they give their lives. They must be instructed until they understand that it is their duty and not their pleasure to support their clergy, keep their church in repair and supplied with all those things that have to be used in the celebration of Mass, Benediction, preaching, and administering the Sacraments.

The obligation arises, and as the little catechism expresses it, from "the Divine Ecclesiastical, and Natural Law." To appreciate this matter we must call to mind the teaching of our faith, and lift up our thoughts from the sordid views which care for gain and calculations about income, so easily forced upon us.

To give to the Church is not the same as to give to the poor. To give alms is an act of charity, to give to the Church is an act of religious worship. All men are bound to make offerings to God. He is their creator and sovereign master, and they must acknowledge it. He is their benefactor and they need to thank Him. He is the avenger of sin and they must propitiate Him. He is the giver of all good and they must ask Him for what they need. In this act of religious worship is included the giving up to God of our understanding to be taught by His Church, of our whole heart to have no wish or desire out of Him. But to offer our heart is to offer all it cares for in time or eternity, friendships and affections within, senses, bodily powers, and material surroundings without--to reserve nothing to ourselves. What is this offering but the acknowledgement of God's ownership which it would be blasphemy to deny? But the least valuable of all possessions is wealth. If therefore we are bound to offer to God our mind and heart, our senses and life, our good name and health, we are certainly under the obligation of offering Him our wealth. That, as well as what else we own, belongs to Him.

The pride begotten of wealth makes us fall into two mistakes.

1st. It makes us forget that God owns every thing on earth, and that we hold under Him as lessees and stewards, and so causes us to feel as if we had acquired title and ownership over Him. The materialized mind looks at the Church and the consecrated graveyard, and says, "That is God's," and around on his home or place of business and says, "This is mine!" You are mistaken. The Church is God's and what you call your house and your land and your stocks and your money are God's, too. Only God holds the Church for His own dwelling and yours He lets to you for a time. To conform your desires to what is just, therefore, you must hold all you have as God's, not yours. If you do not give all to the poor and enter a religious house you must retain it with so loose a hold and so little affection that, when losses fall upon you, you can say in all sincerity with holy Job, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, Blessed be the name of the Lord."

2. The same pride causes another blunder: that of attributing our wealth to our own worth or to our own ability. The real truth is, fortunes grow and wither under the

hand of God. Yet men do not understand this. When they fail they are indeed ready enough to charge it to Almighty God. But when they succeed they attribute all to their own management, sagacity and industry. The saying of the French Emperor, "Providence favors strong battalions," has become popular as applied to pursuits of peace as well as war. But it is as shallow for the one as for the other. It is true that at the moment of the onset, the strong battalion overwhelms the weak one--the shrewd business competitor distances the sluggish and lazy--but as time passes the strong battalion is touched with famine or pestilence, and becomes weak, the sharp wit overreaches itself with risks and falls behind, or in success becomes imbecile and the sport and prey of flatterers.

That same Emperor saw the strong battalions melt away with no foe in front, and carried all his genius into his helpless exile. Say not in your heart, "I am rich and prospering, and I have myself--my industry, frugality, foresight, to thank for it. I owe it to no one and no one shall share it with me." What would your prudence and industry and frugality have availed without the blessing of God? Look around in the striving, greedy world. Colossal fortunes amassed by a single venture, dissipated [in] one unavoidable disaster. We can not read the designs of God so as to say why He gives and why He takes away, but we know that He does give and does take away. What we think comes from one's wit may be the fruit of some orphan's prayer, and the disaster that overwhelms us, may be, would have been averted had we not closed our heart to some appeal for charity some forgotten day gone by. Every one in prosperity is in danger from this pride of wealth.

It must be watched and resisted or it will take the entire mastery of the soul, and make it a ruin and desolation. The world has its picture of misers drawn in lively colors: the lean, hungry-eyed, old men shivering in rags in some garret or cellar watching where their hoards are hidden, men without ties of blood or affection. But these pictures are drawn as of monsters, such as you behold, without a thought that they have or once had feelings like yours. Yet they do not exaggerate the awful power which the unresisted passion of avarice wields over the soul. It is the more awful because it seems so passionless. It throws itself in the heart and becomes conscience and religion. All else is valued literally at what money it will bring in the market. Friendship, honor, love of kindred, are worth what they are worth, in currency. The man may cling to his faith or abandon it, he may be true to his friend or betray him, he may keep his honor unsullied or stain it. But whichever he does he will gain money--and he does not care which.

269.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, April 18, 1878 (5)

[Supporting the House of God]

Editor Catholic Columbian:

There are many people who think that too much money is spent by Catholics on the church, priests' salaries, and the like. Why cannot the seats in the church be free as they are in Europe? Why should we have to pay for worshipping God? It seems to me that if pew rents and collections were abolished, we could all pray with more devotion at the public services of the Church. The circulation of the collection box, and the rattle of pieces in it, is a very great cause of distraction. Our Lord drove the money changers out of the Temple. Does not our system seem like bringing them back again?

DEVOUT.

ANS. It is always pleasanter to have people suggest better plans, than to find fault. It is neither possible nor desirable to have public worship without paying for it. It is not possible, because after your church is built and paid for, repairs, labor in cleaning and keeping in order, vestments, lights, the subsistence of those who serve the altar, all require outlay. Priests do not require very large salaries; but they need, besides "board and clothes," what will enable them to help the poor and show hospitality. It is not desirable to have an inexpensive worship. The devotion which stops with saying, "Lord, Lord," and never does anything substantial for the Lord is pestilential hypocrisy. People who count every cent they give the church as so much wasted in generosity, who can dress well, live well, and keep up show, but get smothered at the quarterly pew rent and groan at the sight of the collection plate, do not understand what it means to be Christian. They are not living in God's grace and are complacently going forward to hear the words, "Depart from me." The devotion which is aggrieved at the sight of a plate or subscription list is hardly skin deep. If our correspondent has any way to suggest by which worship can be supported and worshippers save their souls without cooperating with their means, we shall be glad to have him explain it to us. In Europe during the ages of faith people were glad to use their means in building churches, buying vestments, employing sculptors and painters, founding parish and cathedral livings, and doubtless by this time, they think better of themselves for having done so. But it is better for the living generation not to hunger after cheap devotion, for each member of the congregation to hold himself personally bound from week to week to take his part in paying for candles, altar breads, and the rest of the things required for the decency of the House of God.

270.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, January 30, 1875 (1)

[Obscene Publications]

There are things which no man has a right to put forth as news or reading, and which when wrongly put forth no man has a right to read. Obscene words can not be spoken, written or printed, listened to or read without mortal sin, unless they are necessary to the ends of justice or of charity.

Catholic people have a way of talking about these things as if it were only necessary to be prudent about letting them fall under the eyes of women and children, as if it were lawful for a head of a family to have one kind of reading and the family another.

No Catholic is at liberty to think this way. The law against the sin of impurity--that destroyer of bodies and souls--is equally binding on all. One may be compelled by justice or charity to become acquainted with what is unclean, in print, but no matter what his age, his dignity, or his virtue, he cannot seek such knowledge, whether idly or curiously, without staining his soul as black as a Sodomite's.

A judge, a priest, a physician, sometimes a parent, must know things that are hideous in an unclean mind. But all these must know them with upright souls, and with every guard against the passions they may inspire.

A man who lives a licentious life simply finds his own doom, and that of his accomplices. On earth he suffers the darkness, the disorder, the restless horrors of hell, and, wearing his rotten body out, sinks down to where he belongs. But he who subtly ferments impurity in thousands by what he writes and published does not go down to hell alone. Like Lucifer he takes thousands in his train. No public opinion will justify obscene publications. No sale of such literature enriching those who give it light will buy off from their souls the terrible justice of God.

On the people who tolerate it and the caterers who furnish it that terrible justice will one day fall with overwhelming severity.

These reflections were suggested by the publication in a Columbus paper, lately, of the details of a hideous and beastly crime, and they are written for the purpose of reminding Catholics here, at home, that they can not read such publications without grievous sin.

271.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, December 18, 1858

Cliques and Feuds.

In religious communities, the decay of fervor is always marked by the commencement of broils and cliques. So the waning of faith in Catholic society, is always indicated by the sprit of contention. St. Paul told the Corinthians that they had forgotten Christ, when they began to say "I am of Paul," "I am of Apollos," and the like. So do Catholics of every age forget Christ, forget why they were baptized, why they have the Sacraments, before they begin to separate into cliques and parties, to back bite, and suspect, and annoy one another.

Parties have their origin in human passion, more or less bad according as men are more or less corrupt. Some are founded on a community of self-interest, and are leagues of the wicked and unprincipled. Some take the milder form of national feeling--and it is melancholy to see the weakness of human nature, whereby men who strive after perfection in private, indulge freely in pride, in uncharitableness, in vain-boasting, as patriots. To praise one's self openly is pride that disgusts the world; but to extol the blood, manners, education, of the country, of which we are specimens, is patriotic. To abuse one's neighbor, in set phrase, is uncharitable; but to say that his countrymen are cheats, swindlers, ruffians, boors, ignoramuses, and that he is intensely one of them, is to vindicate the honor of one's native land against assumption of superiority. To pretend to be the wisest, most virtuous, most valorous, most generous, most noble man in the world, only excites derision; but to say that your countrymen are the wisest, most virtuous, most generous, most valorous, most noble people on earth, is to devote yourself to the good of your country.

The Church knows no distinction of races--and he who introduces the distinction into Catholic society, and makes it the basis of his aggrandizement, the defense of his faults, or the mask of his venom, has not the spirit of Christ. It is bad enough for baptized persons to remember, even, the blood which they received from their progenitors, tainted with sin; but to make it a subject of contention and pride, is intolerable--quite anti-Catholic.

Parties are generally the refuge of those whose intellects are weak, whose antecedents are doubtful, whose designs are crooked if not corrupt, whose manhood is a zero, and whose piety is cold and dying. Wheresoever formed, they are fraught with sin and mischief.

Cliques and feuds should be unheard of among Catholics. "In Christ there is no distinction of Jew or Gentile, bond or free;" so in the Church the measure of a man's worth, should be his humility and virtue.