

The Papal System – XXXIV. The Sincerity of Catholic Priests



Continued from [The Papal System – XXXIII. The Mass in Latin.](#)

Among Protestants there is a universal conviction that Romish priests are too well educated to believe in transubstantiation; the legendary stories of the saints, the fires of purgatory; and the delusive powers which they claim to exercise in absolving men from their sins. Perhaps no impression in the world is more firmly rooted than this. And among the masses who reject the Church of the Dark Ages, this opinion is as surely true as a text of Scripture. No doctrine could be more baseless. It would be impossible for an intelligent Protestant; who understands his Bible, to receive the monstrous dogma of transubstantiation, and similar papal dreams and follies.

But the priest had not a Protestant education; did not know his Bible; and did not exercise his intelligence. Commonly, he has been brought up from childhood to believe *everything* the Church of Rome teaches; to regard it as exceedingly wicked to doubt anything for which she demands faith; and to suppress every exercise of his judgment adverse to the Holy Mother. He has been nurtured on miracles, supernatural appearances, and lying wonders from his first conscious moments. These have been communicated to him by the lips of a loving mother, who assured him of their truth, or of some revered priest who came from the presence of God when he stated them; and they were believed by all the kindred and associates of the future priest. In childhood he is assured that Protestants sprung from a rebellious German monk who had many interviews with the devil; and a licentious English King, who wanted, in spite of the holy father, to disgrace and remove his good wife, and elevate his low-born mistress to her place; that their worship is iniquity, and that they shall all be damned. He grows up to regard them, their books, and their religion with horror; and as he knows little, if anything, about their pure Christ-honoring doctrines, there is not much ground for surprise that he clings to the creed of childhood.

In the sacerdotal education of a priest he is brought in contact with nothing Protestant; nothing to shake his faith in the convictions of early days. When he reaches eighty years, his opinions are but the teachings of his mother, and his first spiritual director. He never examined any other creed.

Why would her priests remain in the Church of Rome if they were hypocrites? Threatenings might keep the timid in their old places, but they could not keep all. There is nothing so very attractive in the home of a priest, with no virtuous wife, no loving children, and no real friend; in the confessional where he becomes the pool into which a thousand streams of filth and horror run; nor in his daily life, in which he is the mark for Protestant dislike, and, unless times are changed, for some Catholic suspicion. If he does not believe his doctrines, why does he not come out and follow some worldly calling?

Protestant clergymen frequently give up the ministry; Catholic priests hardly ever turn away into secular life, *The priests of Romanism are full of earnestness as a class*. They have their hypocrites, as all systems have. But the trouble is, there are far too many of them full of zeal for their Church. Are not these priests planning and building churches, seminaries, convents, schools and orphans' homes all over the land? It is not the Catholic laity who are in the van of these enterprises, but the clergy; and at this moment they are moving every energy, and working with untiring zeal in our own and other countries, to build and prop the tottering walls of the papacy.

Luther wished his Parents Dead while he was in Rome, that he might offer up Masses there for them.

As he went up and down the Eternal City a delighted pilgrim, believing all the fables he heard, visiting all the famous churches, gathering rich treasures of merit from his devout exercises and holy deeds, and very happy in his fresh stock of spiritual wealth, he learned how easily he could take souls out of purgatory by masses said in particular places in Rome. He loved his parents; he was ardently attached to his mother: "Oh, how I could like to make my mother happy!" said he. And yet soon after he said: "How much I regret that my father and mother are still alive. What delight I should have in delivering them from the fire of purgatory, by my masses, my prayers, and many other admirable works!" At the fountain head of priestly power he felt that he had an opportunity to relieve his father and mother from the pains of purgatory which might never return; and he wished his loving parents in their long home, that he might send them immediately to Paradise. How intensely earnest Luther was! And what reason have we to suppose that priests today, molded and nurtured under the same influences, are less conscientious?

A Modern Miracle.

While Seymour, a few years ago, was conversing with some Jesuits at Rome, he tried to prove the unreliability of Catholic miracles by relating the case of a priest who took a whole tribe of Indians to one of our western rivers, and there, without any instruction, baptized them; after which he suspended a little cross around the neck of each by a string, and informing them that they were now Christians, he left them. The missionary priest was at Rome on a visit when Seymour was there, and had informed his Jesuit friend himself of the Indian conversion. Two years after the baptism of the natives the priest visited them again, and was greatly surprised to find that none of them had any sins to confess. There was not a single sin committed by one in the tribe since his baptism; it was a miracle the Jesuit insisted. While the priest was

administering the communion to these Indians, one of them was too far off for the priest to put the host into his mouth, but he was kneeling with devout awe, and as the priest was observing him, "The host flew out of his fingers, flew over to the poor Indian, and flew into his mouth." "Oh!" the Jesuit added, in a tone of the most reverential devotion, "the blessed Jesus so loved that poor savage, that he longed to enter into his heart, and thus miraculously flew into his month." Seymour says: "There was a fervor, an earnestness, a devotion of manner that showed he fully believed what he thus narrated. The personal character of the man was such that I had no right to doubt him after so solemn a statement."

There is far less skepticism among Catholics where the Church still retains her hold than among Protestants. The Protestant reasons, hears, or reads both sides, discriminates. The good Catholic receives everything from his Church without scruple, and he believes it.

Catholic priests as a body are intensely earnest; are just as conscientious as ourselves; some of them doubtless, like Luther, before his avowal of Protestantism, or Staupitz, are converted men, but the majority rest on another gospel than Christ's, and are honestly bent on making this Continent their own. Let us treat them as sincere men, and not as hypocrites; and let us not forget that their unquestionable love for their principles gives them immense power, and calls upon us to put on the whole armor of Christ, that this goodly land may be Immanuel's, not the pope's.

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