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## CHURCH INDEFECTIBLE

**Causes of Rapid Spread of Christianity—It Is Authoritative, It Is Sublime—Teaches Consoling Truths—Pagans Convinced—Tertullian—Advent of Redeemer Foretold—Paganism Tried and Found Wanting—Political Condition of the World at the Time—Superhuman Courage of Christians—Power of Working Miracles.**

(Written for The Intermountain Catholic.)

Having shown that it is historically evident that Christianity spread rapidly during the first three centuries, it may be asked: "What caused its widespread success throughout the world?" Like strong and stable government, Christianity commands itself because it is authoritative and proclaims its dogmas with certainty. In its code of morality are embraced the most sublime doctrines, which, when compared with paganism, shows its superiority and divine origin by proclaiming a fundamental truth which the latter never discovered, namely, that there is but one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, without whom "was made nothing that was made." (John I, 3.)

What could be more consoling to the mind of man than that Christianity teaches regarding man's redemption? It tells of the existence of future state where peace and happiness reign forever. The revealed mysteries of Redemption, the Incarnation and Original Sin shed a flood of light on the highest and most abstruse problems of philosophy. They do not, it is true, control the phenomena of the natural order, but they control their explanation, and to this fact Christianity, especially among profound thinkers, owes, in a measure, its wide and rapid progress.

What is true of the authoritative teaching of Christianity applies also to its ethical code, which is the most perfect ever given to man. During the first ages of Christianity, its moral code changed the aspect of the world. Those who embraced the teachings of Christ in those early ages were, for the most part, pagans. They did not abandon their deities nor change their licentious mode of living, for lives of charity, meekness, justice, humility, purity and temperance, until convinced that Christianity was divinely instituted. They conformed their lives to the standard of the gospel. By doing so, their very example was more eloquent than words in demonstrating the truth of the Christian religion and spreading its light in the darkness of paganism. So wonderful was their charity towards one another that the pagans would exclaim: "See how they love one another." This Tertullian paraphrased, saying: "Well may they thus exclaim, for we see they hate one another."

### OTHER CAUSES.

For two thousand years the teaching of the synagogue was a forecast of the coming Messiah, the prophets foretold his advent, and the patriarchs prayed and sighed for his coming. Paganism, which had been on trial for four thousand years, had run its course, and proved a failure in supplying the religious aspirations of mankind. At this period Greek philosophy, which was widespread, furnished an accurate terminology to express the truths of Revelation. The political condition of the world at the time served to spread the growth of Christianity. Rome was the mistress of the world. Nations hitherto separated and, goaded on by savage barbarity, hating each other, were now united, and rendered the spread of Christianity easier. The missionaries, not tied down by national prejudices, had freer and fuller scope.

Another cause, the early Christians displayed such superhuman courage and bravery in the midst of suffering and torture as to elicit the admiration of their persecutors. Not only men, but women and children, in those early ages, endured and suffered the most excruciating tortures and death. Like sheep led to the slaughter, without a moan, they displayed heroic fortitude, often showing feelings of intense joy at being given an opportunity of being dissolved and being with Christ. Many pagans who witnessed not only the extraordinary fortitude, but even the desire to meet death, were converted to Christianity; because they saw that a religion which could produce such heroes and so many martyrs was more than human. Hence the truth of Tertullian's remarks against those pagan persecutors: "Your ingenious cruelty is vain, or, rather, it is a spell which increases our numbers; we multiply under your harvest of slaughter, for the blood of Christians is their seed."

Finally, one of the greatest and most powerful means that led to the rapid spread and growth of Christian teaching was the power of working miracles possessed by the early missionaries. Christ promised this power to His Apostles, because it was necessary in order to convince the pagan world of the divinity of their mission and of their religion, which was to supplant their deities bronzed by the smoke of sacrifice and covered with the dust of ages. Hence, whenever the good of religion required it, these early missionaries exercised the power they had received, which was the last proof that could be given by God to man.

St. Augustine used this argument of miracles wrought by the apostles and their successors against unbelievers of his day. He wrote: "Either miracles accompanied the propagation of the Christian religion, or they did not; if they did, then it is divine; if they did not, then its rapid spread is the greatest of all miracles."

Waiving the effects of grace, we have given here but a superficial view of the chief causes for the rapid spread of Christian teaching during the early ages of the Church. Obstacles to its spread shall be next considered.

"A world, sin-steeped, confronts her; unbridled license reigns; Love's holiest bond unhonored; vast multitudes in chains; Despairing, sullen millions uncomprehending see

## PADLOCKING CHURCH.

In large cities, during the summer months, many Protestant churches are closed and no religiously disposed person need apply for admission to say a prayer or examine his conscience. Commenting on this, Julius Chambers, a journalist in the Brooklyn Eagle, writes:

"Ministers often set the example of abstinence by going away themselves for three or four months at a stretch. Think of the incalculable moral peril in which they place those of their followers who would wish to sit under their ministrations. Think of the mental distress that any one of us will suffer if we have to die in summer time, without the consolations of religion as dispensed by our beloved teacher.

"I tell you, it is not a joke for a devout man, compelled to remain in the city during the heated term, to be told he is going to die. One minister after another may be called up on the telephone; faithful friends, dashing hither and thither in vain, may seek the desired peacemaker, but unless the sufferer be a Catholic, he will have to ask some friend to read the prayers for the dying and to take him in his human arms, since the heavenly ones are afar.

"It is just to say of the Catholic Churches that they are never closed and that some priest is always at his post of duty. As a Protestant I am glad to state a fact. We do not hear that attendance at the churches of that denomination is decreasing. No, indeed! And the reason is the unflinching devotion of the priesthood to their duties. They do not shut their churches and vanish.

"The padlocking of the Protestant churches is almost wicked. Very often during an active life in this city I have wished for a few minutes' prayerful meditation, and have always sought a Catholic Church. There, undisturbed by other worshippers equally intent upon securing heavenly aid, I have always found peace and mental refreshment. Many Protestants are known to me who never pass St. Patrick's Cathedral without entering for a brief self-examination. It is a glorious privilege."

### The Temple of Bel

Regarding the recent discovery of the old temple of the idol Bel on the site of Babylon, a writer in the Jewish Chronicle points out that the deepest interest of the "find" is the discovery of a secret passage into the temple. This bears out the story in the Apocrypha in the Book of Bel and the Dragon. The idol Bel was served with a daily provision of a large quantity of stores, which he was supposed to consume. Certainly they disappeared, and the believing faithful were under the impression that they were consumed by the idol. Daniel, however, hinted to the king that the public was being duped, and suggested that the priests themselves, aided by their families, disposed of the provisions. The temple was jealously guarded and guards testified that no one had entered. When the doors were opened, it was found that the provisions had disappeared. Daniel's life seemed naturally forfeited, but he had taken the precaution to strew the floor of the temple with ashes unknown to the priests. The provisions had certainly disappeared, but with a perspicacity that ages ago forestalled the methods of Sherlock Holmes, Daniel pointed to numerous footprints on the ashes. These were followed, and there was discovered a secret passage through which the priests and their families had been in the habit of nightly entering the temple. Daniel was triumphant and the priests were punished.—Alabama Catholic.

### The Clean Mouth

A distinguished author says: "I resolved when a child never to use a word which I could not pronounce before my mother." He kept his resolution, and became a pure-minded, noble, honored gentleman. His rule and example are worthy of imitation by every boy.

Boys really learn a class of low, vulgar words and expressions which are never heard in respectable circles. Of course, we cannot imagine a decent girl using words she would not utter before her father or her teacher or most esteemed friend.

Such vulgarity is thought by some boys to be "smart," the next thing to "swearing," and yet "not so wicked." But it is a habit which leads to profanity, and fills the mind with evil thoughts. It vulgarizes and degrades the soul, and prepares the way for many of the gross and fearful sins which now corrupt society.

### Walking as An Exercise.

The person who walks four miles a day, who can walk a mile in fifteen minutes without strain, is getting the benefit of the simplest, the cheapest, the readiest and one of the best forms of exercise. Walking may not be the complete exercise, but it is so nearly so that the habitual walker can keep himself in good condition without anything else. To be able to strike out easily and naturally with a steady and swinging stride, to reel off miles without fatigue, is for the man or woman an accomplishment to be envied. There is real pleasure in it when one learns. There is profit in it that is more than money.

The blazoning on her banners: "The Truth Shall Make You Free!"

"A light shone in the darkness; the darkness lifted then; The Church of God is in the world to win the hearts of men.

"Good tree: good fruit"; her Founder said: she dare not shrink the test; From out His mouth she stands condemned or she must show the best!

"What hand, save hers, smote Caesar—set free the helpless slave? What hand, save hers, to woman exalted station gave? Her model, Mary, Mother of Jesus, and to be, Throughout all time, the model of stainless purity." F. D.

(To be continued.)

## THE VISION OF OSMOND.

(By H. V. A. Ferguson.)

In that Cistercian Abbey of Good Rest\* Whose walls aforetime rose in Brittany, Osmond the monk, above his fellows blest In visions which the Lord gave him to see, Still wore the belt of penance next his skin, And strove right solidly to conquer sin.

The evensong was ended, and the last Of the long file of brothers, sandal-shod, From out the candle-lighted chapel passed, And Osmond, lifting up his thoughts to God, As he was wont, within his cell of stone Threw back his cowl, and knelt, and prayed alone.

But prayer was irksome, and the headman's heart Was unresponsive to his murmuring lip. His bosom felt a sting, a lingering smart: Slow and more slow the beads began to slip, And the monk dropped the chaplet ere he prayed The Pater Noster of the First Decade.

For on that evening when he took his stand At the abbatial table, where he stood With a bright-burning taper in his hand While the grave Abbot ate his simple food, An alien thought, rebellious, and unkind, Had thrust itself into his brooding mind.

"Who is this man," with whispered word he said, "That like a menial I before him stand; That I must lucky him while he is fed, And hold a guttering candle in my hand? Is this Christ's service? 'Tis our Abbot's pride, And his vainglory mocks The Crucified."

Moreover, he was broken with his toil, And the hot sun had scorched him to the bone. His veins were full of fever from the soil, And the drawn lips could scarce repress their moan.

Almost the fragile frame and wasted face Showed life remitted to a half-hour's grace.

So, dazed, and scarcely knowing what he did, Upon the meager pallet of his rest He flung his aching body down, and hid His wan face in his hood, and on his breast Crossed his thin palms, and, wearied unto death, Lay twitched with pain, and drew convulsive breath.

But suddenly it seemed as if the air Were fanned by pinions, and a faint perfume Was scattered, as of new-blown roses rare, And lo, a stranger stood within the room: Some seraph, it should seem, some Prince of Light, For all his flowing robe was strangely bright.

A thoughtful brow ennobled the calm face, Whose lines at once were resolute and meek. His manly figure, too, had youthful grace, And by the purple honors of his cheek, And the bright hair that like a glory shone, He wist it was none other but Saint John.

Then Osmond did not dare to longer look, But on his brow he felt cool fingers press.— Cool as soft linen drenched in some wild brook, And the fierce fever lapsed to nothingness. In place of twinging joints and fiery pains, A drowsy dew crept softly through his veins.

"Surely, I slept," he cried, and thought to mark His inch of candle flickering to its death, But the stone cell was in Egyptian dark, And in his first surprise he gasped for breath. Then the cell opened, and he saw a light, And sweet Saint John ascending out of sight,

Where a glory, streaming out of cloudy portals, Burned like boreal banner on the sky, And wings and faces—legions of immortals,— Were visible to his dilated eye; And then a voice cried from the heavenly gate, "They also serve who only stand and wait."

And Osmond knew the vision had been sent To tame his spirit, and his eyes grew wet: "O thou Beloved Disciple, I rely, Mine was the pride. Oh, let me not forget The heavenly lesson thou hast taught to me This holy instance of humility.

"If thou couldst leave the ever-blessed choir To bring the coolness of the middle sky To a poor monk who felt the fever's fire, How much more willingly, alas, should I Before God's Abbot take my place, and stand, Bearing the lighted candle in my hand.

"True Knight of Christ's Round Table, let me still Be of the tonsured chivalry of God The simplest soldier. Jesu, do Thy will! Let me pursue the path which Thou hast trod, Till, like Saint Francis, in my hands I see The marks that show how like I am to Thee."

Then slowly through the Fifteen Mysteries, Divided into holy groups of three, (Each bead a step accomplished to the skies,) He prayed his pious way on bended knee: Through the Great Rosary, every bead but one, For Matins rang before his task was done.

That day he labored, and he took his place At evening where he had been wont to stand, A tranquil rapture in his pallid face, Bearing the lighted taper in his hand, Hard by the Abbot's table, where were spread His garden herbs, and morsel of coarse bread.

But the good Abbot said, "I prythee, sit; Sit thou at table. 'Tis for me to stand, And while I stand thy supper shall be lit, Even by the twinkling taper in my hand. I should have seen before how thou wast shent, Yea, thou shalt judge me as thy penitent."

And he forced him gently, and he sat, And all the gray cows marvelled when they saw The Abbot standing while monk Osmond ate, Because it overset the cloistral law, And then they said, "He loves him, needs he must, To thus abase himself into the dust."

\*The Abbey of Bon Repos, mentioned by Montalembert in "The Monks of the West."

## A SOCIALIST MAYOR.

The election of a Socialist, running on a Socialist ticket, as mayor of Milwaukee, is regarded with misgivings by conservative persons all over the country. Whilst admitting considerable significance in the fact that one of the largest cities in the union should thus deliberately register its choice at the polls, we are disinclined to see in this Socialistic victory either the sinister sign or the glorious inaugural that is read into it as one happens to be hostile or friendly to the Socialist cause. The people of Milwaukee seem to have had grounds for serious dissatisfaction with the two dominant political parties in their municipal government. Their choice of a Socialist for their mayor was more an expression of their disapproval of local political machines than of their approval of Socialism. As Henry James would say, their love of Socialism is simply an allotropic form of their temporary dislike for Democrats and Republicans. The chastisement having been inflicted and its purposes fulfilled, the Socialists will shrink to their normal proportions at the next election.

But the incident carries a lesson with it. Socialism takes advantage of popular discontent with existing evils to offer fair and effective remedies. On these it lays most stress; its irreligion and denial of the individual's rights and all its pernicious theories built on human envy and whitened over with a plausible and ostentatious charity—these Socialism keeps for the time being in the background. Let corrupt statesmen and venal politicians and unprincipled and heartless commercialism continue to trade with the rights of the public and to ignore the law and to escape its penalties and, it is the dream of the Socialists, and not altogether a dream—the voters of the country will swallow their remedies at last. The strength of the Socialists lies in the political corruption and commercial greed of their adversaries. It is almost useless to fight them with pamphlets. This is a case where example is better than precept. The ordinary citizen has a sort of pragmatic philosophy. If he is convinced that existing conditions are intolerable he will seek others more promising; and to reach the light, even though it be a will of the wisp, he will resolutely trample down logic and argument.—America.

### Goes to West Point.

Again an American Catholic, worthy of the name, has won high honors before the world. Major General Thomas H. Barry, U. S. A., who rose from a poor boy of New York City to the highest rank in the army, is to be the next superintendent of the United States Military academy at West Point.

General Barry is well known in San Francisco. He came here last December to assume the important office of commander of the Department of California, and now he is to take charge of West Point.

General Barry is the third youngest of the major generals now on the active list of the army. He is today one of the best known officers—and admitted the handsomest—in the army, and was the commander-in-chief of the army of Cuban pacification that was sent to Cuba following the governmental troubles there a few years ago. He will also be remembered as the officer who was the grand marshal of the Catholic centenary parade in New York City a few years ago, at which time Archbishop Farley, in a speech, affectionately referred to him as "my big brother."—Monitor.

### Nansen's Carrier-Pigeon.

One day a carrier pigeon tapped at the window of Mrs. Nansen's home in Christiania. Instantly the window was opened and the wife of the famous Arctic explorer in another moment covered the little messenger with kisses and caresses.

The carrier pigeon had been away from the cottage thirty long months, but had not forgotten the way home. It brought a note from Nansen, stating that all was going well with his expedition in the polar regions.

Nansen had fastened a message to the bird and turned it loose.

The frail carrier darted out into the blizzard air, flew like an arrow over perhaps a thousand miles of frozen waste and then over another thousand miles of ocean and plains and forests to enter the window of its waiting mistress and deliver the message which she had been awaiting so anxiously.

We boast of human pluck, sagacity and endurance; but this loving carrier pigeon after an absence of thirty months accomplished a feat so wonderful that we can only give ourselves up to amazement and admiration.—Nansen's Arctic Explorations.

### Just a Thought

A childish good time does not consist in never being punished. No, indeed, there are times when even the very best of children, just like grown-up people, need the strongest kind of discipline. But the thing is not to be scolding and nagging at them all the time, making them cross and irritable and developing in them nervous and ugly dispositions which will cling to them all their lives. The thing is to punish them and then forget all about it, and be kind, considerate and gentle.

### Oldest Bishop.

The Right Rev. Bishop Cameron of Antigonish, New Brunswick, died last week. His death was a great shock to his diocese. He was born at South River February 16, 1826. Having received his early training in his native district and at the famous Grammar School at St. Andrews, he was sent by Bishop McKinnor to the College of the Propaganda, which he entered November 12, 1844. He studied in that famous seat of learning for ten years with distinguished success. He received Holy Orders July 28, 1853.

### Fifteen Years in the Purple.

Fifteen years in the Purple, His Grace Archbishop Langevin of St. Boniface, Canada, celebrated Wednesday the anniversary of his consecration.

## STANDARDS OF MEN'S LIVES

**God's Word Inexhaustible—Bible Most Ancient Record—An Historical Monument—Ignorance of Scriptures Means—Bible Model of Literary Excellence—History, Tenderness, Pathos, Eloquence, Descriptive Power and Terrible Images Found in Certain Books—Psalms of David—Sentiments Needed When Reading Bible—Should Never Be Quoted Carelessly.**

In his masterly work, "The Ambassador of Christ," the illustrious Cardinal Gibbons thus beautifully treats of the excellence of the study of Holy Writ:—"The word of God is an inexhaustible treasury of science. It is the only oracle that discloses to us the origin and sublime destiny of man, and the means of attaining it. It is the key that interprets his relations to his Creator. It is the foundation of our Christian faith, and of our glorious heritage. Its moral code is the standard of our lives. If our Christian civilization is so manifestly superior to all actual and pre-existing social systems, it is indebted for its supremacy to the ethical teachings of Holy Writ."

Viewed as an historical chronicle, it is the most ancient, the most authentic, the most instructive and interesting record ever presented to mankind. It contains the only reliable history of the human race before the Deluge. Were it not for the Hebrew annals, the antediluvian world would be a complete blank, a subject of mere speculation to all succeeding generations. The Decalogue is seven hundred years older than the jurisprudence of Lycurgus, two thousand years older than that of Justinian, twenty-seven hundred years older than the Magna Charta, thirty-three hundred years older than the Code Napoleon, and almost as many years older than the American Constitution; and yet the Decalogue is better known today, and more generally inculcated than any laws ever framed by the hand of man.

It is an historical monument that has remained impregnable for thousands of years, and has successfully withstood the violent shocks of the most formidable assaults. There is not a single arch, or column, or key-stone in the sacred edifice that does not show some marks of a foreign or domestic assault. But there it stands, as firm as the Pyramids, unshaken and unruined by the upheavals and revolutions of centuries. The Bible is the only book that our Savior is known ever to have read or quoted in the whole course of his public ministry. He makes no allusion whatever to the classic literature of Athens or Rome that flourished in His day.

"To be ignorant of the Scriptures," writes St. Jerome, "is to be ignorant of Jesus Christ." The Venerable Bede says:—"At the age of seven, I entered a Monastery, where I consecrated my whole life to the meditation of the Scriptures." He died in the act of translating the last chapter of St. John's Gospel.

St. Bernard's sermons are a scriptural mosaic. In fact, the Sacred Text is so interwoven with every fibre of the discourses and writings of the Fathers, that if the Bible were lost, it would be almost fully recovered in their works.

Then for the style, majestic and divine, It speaks no less than God, in every line; Commanding words, whose force is still the same As the first fiat, that produced our frame.

Apart from its inspired character, the Bible is a model of literary excellence. For sublimity of conception, what classic author, ancient or modern, can compare with the prophet Isaiah, or the great St. John? Where can we find greater charm and consistency of historical narrative than in the Books of Samuel, or those of Kings and the four Gospels? Where more tenderness and pathos than in the Lamentations of Jeremiah; more eloquence than in the Epistles of St. Paul? Greater descriptive power than in the Apocalypse? Where can we find more majestic and terrible images than in the Book of Job?—whilst, for graphic description, no author has ever approached him. The grandest poetic creations of human genius pale into insignificance before the Psalms of David, as sublime in thought as they are matchless in beauty and grandeur of expression. The noblest images in Milton and Dante are borrowed from the pages of the Sacred Writings. Cardinal Gibbons reminds us that the simplicity of Hebrew pastoral life is portrayed in the Book of Ruth in a style so charming and so true to nature that it is not excelled by any passage in Homer, or in the Eclogues of Virgil.

It is well known that our great national bard owes much to the Inspired Writings for many of the noblest passages in his immortal writings. Finally, there is a grace in the inspired pages, and an efficacy such as no human production could possibly possess. "For the word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword, and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. iv, 12.)

Well might the Scottish bard cry out in an outburst of admiration at the beauty and sublimity of the Inspired Volume:—

"Within that awful Volume lies The Mystery of Mysteries! Happiest they of human race, To whom God has granted grace To read, to fear, to hope, to pray, To lift the latch, and force the way; And better had they ne'er been born, Who read to doubt, or read to scorn."

Though "all Scripture inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice" (II Tim. iii, 16); "though no book is holier or more Divine, yet none is more abused, none more easy to wrest to one's own destruction" (II Pet. iii, 16). What is the reason of this? The

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