

V. Spiritual Life

D. Other Issues of Persons

c. Spiritual Advice

210.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, March 6, 1875 (3)

The Catholic Church and Morality.

To us the spectacle of some Rev. Bohemian like B. J. Loomis, throwing out by way of insult the assertion that the Catholic Church encourages people to commit crime, is not incomprehensible. But that any one who has conscience enough to try to understand what he says, and to speak the truth, should say such a thing, is beyond our conception.

Three things encourage crime:

1. Whatever heats the passions.
2. Ignorance of moral obligations.
3. Hope of impunity.

What heats the passions is the indulgence of them. These unhealthy appetites, unlike the normal ones, are satisfied only by denying them all gratification, and grow more ungovernable the more we yield to them. The child that is brought up to think that rich and unrestrained eating and drinking, idle dissipation, showy dressing, and display are the height of happiness, which economy and fashion alone restrain, will learn very soon to put no restraint upon its appetites where appearances do not interfere.

But the Catholic Church begins, as soon as reason dawns in the soul, to impress upon the child the lesson that the end of living is to know, love and serve God, and that consequently all else but that knowledge and service is valuable only as a means to it.

Hence that the highest and most useful knowledge is the knowledge of what God requires of us; and the perfection of life is the subduing of our passions, and holding them under the mastery of mind. A Catholic youth may give himself up to self-indulgence, but when he does so he knows it to be in defiance of the teaching of his faith. The Church has to insist very much in this generation on the necessity of teaching moral obligations or the law of God. Outsiders make it a reproach against her that she considers schools useless and dangerous to her children that keep silence on this momentous subject. Read her little catechism, in which the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, etc., are explained, and see whether there is any point in man's duty to God, to his neighbor and himself, which is left out in this compendium of divine law. If Catholics are ignorant of their duties and obligations, it is because they were brought up in the wrong school, or neglected to study, or stayed away from catechism and Church, when they should have been instructing themselves, or had

parents who were "liberal Catholics" and thought it not worth while to spend so much time on so unimportant a study.

The Church holds out no hope of escape from retribution to the criminal. She does not allow him to persuade himself that he is driven to sin by necessity, for she teaches free will; or to hope for any escape from the judgment of the All-seeing and All-just.

True, she teaches that sin may be forgiven, but the doctrine of forgiveness is the very essence of Christianity. All who believe in Christ teach the forgiveness of sins, for those sects which say that God neither forgives nor punishes, can scarcely claim to be called Christians. But in the manner of forgiveness the Catholic doctrine holds out more motives for avoiding sin, than the common one of the sects.

They teach that the sinner must repent and resolve to sin no more. So does the Church.

But they teach that repentance is mere sentiment confined to the sinner's breast. The Church teaches that repentance is not mere sentiment, but must be put in act by an humble confession of the sins, one by one, to a priest, by the restoration of goods unjustly acquired, of reputation injured by calumny, of scandal given by false doctrines. It is therefore only the ignorant, the prejudiced and the designedly unfair who can say that the Catholic religion brought any one to a felon's prison.

211.

Sermon, Book 1, No. 2

Conscience

Every one is prone to overestimate himself. Self-love prevents him from studying his own defects, and keeps him ruminating on his real or imagined good qualities, until he puts a value on himself far above that at which his friends rate him. Even when he has made some ugly blunders and betrayed a weakness he cannot disguise from himself, he extenuates and excuses it and like one seeing himself in a glass soon manages to forget what manner of man he is.

There is nothing about us we are more liable to our rate than our own rectitude, and fair intentions. Those who have knowledge of this would often remark that there is no stage of guilt and degradation where self-respect is quite lost. Those whom spectators consider altogether given over to vice are yet proud, because they can number crimes they have never yet committed, forgetting the gulf they have plunged into, because they can see a gulf still deeper below them. St. Paul, watching the garments of those who stoned St. Stephen to death, or breathing threats and slaughter on his way to Damascus, would have thought the man a heretic who, meeting him, would have warned him against being too eager in dragging Christians before the

tribunal and putting them in prisons, or [who would] have suggested that he might possibly change his opinion of that sect one day. Yet afterwards St. Paul speaks of his zeal as sinful, as making [him] the last of the Apostles and unworthy of the name. So man may sin while he thinks himself conscientious.

Now among us it has grown into a sort of recognized theory that if one follows the dictates of conscience no matter what he believes or what he does, he will be blameless in the sight of God. And the theory is true in a certain sense, as it is false in another.

It is false in one sense as is evident in the case of St. Paul, who says that he sinned although he “did it ignorantly.” It is true in another sense because there can be no malice in doing what one honestly thinks is right while he is doing it. We must therefore see what conscience is and how far right and wrong depend upon it.

Conscience is no faculty or service of the human mind, distinct from intellect. The same understanding that comprehends geography and mathematics, when it is used to perceive the right and wrong of actions, is conscience. It must see the law outside of it and the act within it and judge whether the one fits the other. Hence it is clear that there are two ways for conscience to err—by not knowing the law, and by not knowing the act.

Ignorance of the law may arise from inability or unwillingness to learn. If it arises from total inability to learn, there is no fault [in] it, and no guilt in following it, for the ignorance is thus invincible.

All writers agree that there can be no invincible ignorance of the general principles of the natural law, such as one God is to be adored and worshipped, render to every man his own, and rule thyself. Hence the worship of idols, the crimes of theft, murder, slander, lying, gluttony and lust are always inexcusable. But of many positive requirements of the law man may be in justifiable ignorance. Thus he that does not know the Church is not bound to believe in the Sacraments, assist at Mass on Sundays and holidays, observe the fasts, etc.

But ignorance of the law is too often willing, and when it is it never excuses from sin. If a man pleads in the Day of Judgment that he did not know, his plea is answered by the counter plea that he ought to have known, that it was his own fault if he did not know.

Willingness to be ignorant has two ways of showing itself. One is by directly refusing to be informed and the other by carelessly neglecting it. He who directly refuses to be informed is already guilty of every violation of the law, because by refusing he shows the will not to observe it in any particular. The doctrine of the Church that there is no salvation outside its pale has been denounced as harsh and uncharitable. But people who studiously avoid examination and determine from the outset never to subject themselves to her authority, thereby exclude themselves from

salvation, for they say in effect to God that unless He will save them their own way they do not want to be saved at all. St. Paul considers himself inexcusable in persecuting the Christians because, in the mood that then had possession of him, he did not want salvation except as a Pharisee.

How far careless neglect will excuse ignorance depends very much on the importance of the point ignored. There are some points which the nature of things binds one to study at once and thoroughly. He who gives himself out a physician is inexcusable if he does not know medicine, or lawyer, if he does not know law, or preacher, if he does not know religion.

In general any one living in a state or condition of life is inexcusable if he neglects to know the duties of that state and his plea of ignorance, far from excusing, would only highlight his fault.

Thus for example the Church teaches that if a confessor, through ignorance of theology, fails to enforce the restoring of ill-gotten goods, he becomes a party to the injustice, and in case the penitent has been admitted to the Sacraments, and is now no longer known, the priest is obliged to make the restitution out of his own means.

It is obvious that the question of the true religion, in a community like ours, is one upon which careless ignorance will admit of no excuse. The subject is so transcendently importuned that whoever does not study it must have already made up his mind to take the world for his portion and let eternity go by the board; and that will be a virtual renunciation of Heaven and a declaration of rebellion against God.

If any one were to ask from what cause does ignorance of the law most frequently arise the answer seems to be, from the fact that men too conveniently take themselves for their law and forget that he that judgeth is the Lord. They are apt to remain tranquil as long as they have not shocked their own notions of propriety, and never refer matters to the will of God at all. I have known men who had been guilty of profanity, blasphemy, drunkenness and infidelity to declare, with great apparent sincerity, that they had nothing to regret in the course of their past lives. There are others who think they have committed no sin if they have not stolen anything or killed anybody. When such appear before the judgment of God what a revolution there will be in their ideas! What a sudden fall from a great height to find that their own standard of right was never known and is not at all recognized in the court where the decision is to be authoritative and final. And that they might have known it long ago but for willful and inexcusable carelessness!

Conscience may be erroneous not only from ignorance of the law but also from ignorance of the act. That is, a person may know a certain act to be wrong but he may not know in the confusion of the moment that he is doing it. This ignorance may also be either unintentional or willful.

Any one acting under great excitement, physical or moral, may be deprived for

the moment of all reflection and advertence; so far as not to know even what he does. The most common instance of this are the actions performed under the excitement of strong drink. But his ignorance also may be malicious or unintentional. If one foresaw that the excitement would probably carry him away and yet courted it, he is guilty of every sin he commits under its influence. So the drunkard is guilty before God of every oath and every act of violence he commits while under the maddening influence of drink; and those who read bad books or frequent improper company cannot be excused for any excess which excitement may have rendered involuntary at the moment because they willfully threw themselves in the way of temptation.

But there can be no malice in what could not be foreseen and is not adverted to until after it is done.

There are no involuntary sins. The first burst of anger, the first motion of temptation, the unconscious wandering of the mind in prayer, the feeling of discouragement tempting to dispose are not sins but only temptations to sin.

Ignorance of the act excuses from sin therefore when it is not willed directly or indirectly, but not when it results from previous carelessness and courting of temptation.

212.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, May 8, 1875 (4)

Honor

Every natural desire is legitimate and, if controlled by reason, good.

The craving of the soul after honor is its natural need of its Creator's testimony to its fidelity and its worth. "There is one who seeketh and judgeth," expresses one of our deepest natural convictions. Hence the wild efforts that men put forth when they take the world for master and seek the world's esteem instead of God's--fame instead of honor. The feeling is so deep, so near to our nature, that to live and to be moved by it are almost one and the same thing, and the toil it involves is as near measureless as our capacity for toil.

The highest of the world's heroes is as nothing to the lowest of God's. The most insignificant of the saints is a star set eternally in Heaven; the most brilliant of the world's great men is a meteor gliding into darkness to return no more.

The nations that were dazzled and the leaders who dazzled them shall stand before God's judgment and receive retribution of their deeds from Him with whom is "no respect of persons." The "trumpet of Fame" will be buried in hell; but the voice of Honor will resound forever among the multitudes in heaven. Let the soul that aspires after something above the common lot, spurn the honor that can come by accident or be won by fraud, and seek that which is true and unending.

213.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, November 4, 1854

All is Vanity.

The last delusion that clings to the mind of the Christian, is apt to be a kind of confidence in the general rectitude of the world--a belief that when the case of the innocent is fairly stated, the oppressor will be condemned and compelled to desist from his unjust persecutions. This is a delusion. The world is essentially malignant, and therefore essentially devoid of the love of justice. Where the defense of innocence conduces to popularity, where the advocacy of truth is, or is about to be, favorably received, hosts of heroes spring up ready to defend and advocate. But where nothing but adherence to principle is the reward of an unpopular course, innocence suffers unpitied, and truth is trampled on unheeded. The justice of the world is a vanity. Even the justice that history does to the maligned by their cotemporaries, is imperfect--not only because tardy, but also because confined to a few individuals whose course from unpopular has become popular. Boniface VIII., Gregory VII., and Innocent III., are raised by Protestant writers from the pit of obloquy in which they had fallen; but it is because resistance to tyrant kings, which made them odious in a Cæsar-worshipping age, became afterwards a well-loved opinion of the multitude.

Multitudes of men equally great with these sleep now in forgotten tombs; the calumnies of which they were the victims are forgotten but were never confuted. Under pagan governments how many martyrs have gone to the dungeon, the rack, the gibbet, the wild beasts, under a load of false accusations, to be rebutted only in the day of general judgment! Under heretical governments how many innocent men have been dragged before tribunals as rebels to the civil power, their true offence being fidelity to religion, and put to death! Among these history has done a tardy justice to Sir Thomas More and Archbishop Fisher. But the cotemporaries of More and Fisher, as innocent as they, are no longer known by name and never will be vindicated.

Here, in our own country, the Catholics are traduced and calumniated; and when they are forced to appeal to the world's magnanimity and ask the world's justice, their appeal and their petition pass unheeded.

The sooner we make up our minds to expect nothing true, nothing beautiful, nothing magnanimous, nothing just, from the world, the fewer will be our surprises, and vexations, and heartaches at the persecution we experience from its blinded votaries.

214 - Consider Your Calling

214.

Editorial, from *The Catholic Columbian*, July 10, 1875

[Consider Your Calling]

This is the special privilege we ask for Catholics which Protestants do not enjoy: that they believe all the sacred truths which the Holy Catholic Church believes and teaches. It is an immense privilege, and it is denied, through their own fault, of course, to multitudes who think themselves wiser, and are certainly more powerful and prosperous than Catholics. It was in allusion to this that the first Pope said to "the dispersed about Pontus and Phrygia," the poor Catholics all over the world, "See your calling." Consider what you are called to be: children of God and heirs to Heaven, and leave the world to those who love it and want it for their portion.

215.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, January 22, 1862

Good Wishes not Good Works.

Many easy-going people take no particular pains to find out what God requires of them, because they expect to slide into heaven on their good intentions. They "mean right." They "sympathize with the oppressed"--they feel compassion for the poor (especially those who do not ask alms of *them*)--they loathe vice, and always condemn loudly their wicked neighbors. They may have slipped sometimes on their moral journey--but if the world knew the circumstances, and considered their intentions, it could not censure them. To be sure, they never did anything but follow their inclinations. They never laid a single unselfish act on the altar of God, but they would have done so, had they been called upon. Had the known duty required it of them, they would have suffered as much as the martyrs, been as devout as the confessors, as austere as the anchorites. Whatever they may have done, they always meant to do right.

It is the easiest thing in nature to wish to do right. Probably not the most abandoned profligate on whom the sun yet shines, is without his aspirations after good--does not soothe his conscience in the face of what he does, by the fancy of what he intends. The intemperate man, as he awakes from a debauch, weeps honest tears when he looks around on his squalid and desolate home, resolves a thousand acts of atonement for his brutality to his family, and gets drunk again as soon as possible.

We have two natures within us, the intellectual and the sensual. The intellectual nature, however darkened, can never be extinguished--and it is perpetually struggling towards what is truly, enduringly good. The sensual nature is ever seeking its present satisfaction as matter gravitates to matter, and takes no note of past or future. It cares naught for sweets enjoyed, and fears not privations that are yet to come. Hence, while it

216 - The Spirit in which we should Work

is tyrannizing over the soul *now*, it makes no objection to innumerable acts of self-denial in the future. The intellectual sees what is good, prizes it, desires it; but the sensual nature *feels* its gratifications, clamors for them, struggles after them with almost resistless energy. So while mind resolves sense acts; and the hurrying years sweep by, finding intellect ever solacing itself in the past and future, and sense ever revelling in the possession of the present, until death closes the turmoil, and reveals to the soul that its good intentions have paved its road to reprobation--that it has gone on dreaming and intending, purposing and resolving, while the brute appetites *worked*, absorbed its energies and compassed its ruin.

Let no man think any better of himself for having good intentions, until he has fulfilled them. Not the hearers but the doers of the law are justified, not those who cry Lord, Lord, but those who do the Father's will, can meet the judgment. One work is worth a million wishes. One alms is dearer to God than an ocean of philanthropy. Work then, and leave off wishing.

216.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, February 19, 1862

The Spirit in which we should Work.

The earnestness and zeal of the Catholics of Cincinnati are manifest in their churches and charitable institutions. There are many among us willing to work for God, and whoever wishes it can find plenty of edification in our midst. It would be a pity to see so much zeal and charity lose any of its fruit by taking a wrong direction. We must work in a spirit of faith, forgetfulness of the world, disregard of self.

Whoever joins a benevolent society, or helps to build a church or an orphan asylum, must do it in a spirit of faith. He must not count the time or money he expends in such a work, or imagine that he is making any one a debtor but himself. He must not act through human respect, or a desire to emulate, but he must do what he does with the old Crusaders' motto, "God wills it!" This life flies from us swifter than an arrow; let us use it in earnest to obtain what is abiding.

The figure of this world passeth away. Time sweeps by, carrying away with it wealth, health, youth, joy, honor, friends, and leaving us alone with God. To keep one's good works from being barren, we must live as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. The world is full of scheming, rivalry, hate, evil-speaking, ambition, jealousy. It has maxims of its own, and interests it calls vast. These do not belong to Catholics. Let the dead bury their dead. Let those who love the world, bear its honors and feel its pangs. What we do in the way of charities, let us do with no view to promote our worldly interest, but for the sake of Christ.

Thus shall we reach that perfection of virtue from which the world dare not

withhold its homage--forgetfulness of self. It is better to be imposed on and swindled, and sneered at, remaining unselfish, than to command respect and outwit rivalry, by never acting but with a view to self-interest. It is better to lavish kindness on the unworthy, than to make our alms a pawnbroker's advance for worldly profit. It is better to have the world sneer at us as credulous, than to have the poor curse us as hard-hearted.

Happy we, if faith that despises the world and forgets self, could be made the spring and source of all our actions.

217.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, November 15, 1856

Wasted Talent.

We have talent and learning enough in the Catholic body in this country. Every year we see long lists of persons graduating from our Catholic institutions; and we are assured that they have shown themselves proficient in all branches of science. Under these circumstances the inquiry very naturally suggests itself to our minds, Where do this talent, this learning, these accomplishments go, when they leave the college and the convent? Why is not their influence more felt and more acknowledged in society, in which they ought to act?

Certainly those talents are not lost with the close of school-days. Whoever had the ability and industry to distinguish himself in school, ought to be able to distinguish himself in the world. Whoever was the leader in school-boy frolics, the oracle in school-boy doubts, the judge in school-boy quarrels, ought to be such in the active life for which his school days are the preparation.

Neither are the accomplishments of Catholic youth lost by comparison with those of non-Catholics. It is true that, notwithstanding the undoubted competency of our teachers, the standard of education is not so high among us as it is in Europe. But it is, at least, as high as it is among non-Catholics. While the physical sciences, mathematics, rhetoric, etc., are as well taught in Catholic as in Protestant institutions, the classics, history, and the most refined accomplishments are inculcated with infinitely greater accuracy and ability by our secular and regular teachers, and by our devoted nuns, than by the speculating conductors of Protestant academies and boarding schools. One who has graduated with honor at a Catholic institution need fear no comparison with any scholar in the country.

How is it, then, that this intermingling of energy, talent, and learning with the great mass of American life does not make itself visible in the manners, conversation, and literature of the people? Why is it that ignorance of Catholic doctrine and contempt of Catholic customs are still so common in the public mind?

218 - A Catholic Public Opinion

We believe the great cause of this is want of devotion, earnestness, disinterestedness, in those who, having talents, waste them in unworthy pursuits.

Every Catholic ought to regard himself as an Apostle. If our faith is worthy of belief, it deserves the service of our being. If our home is eternity, every act of our lives should be a step toward its happy enjoyment.

It is sickening to see educated Catholics mixing themselves up in the interests of the world, adopting its sentiments, courting its favors, fawning upon its idols. If the poor laborers on the railroads, give themselves up to political excitement, and hurrah for this side or that as though life or death were pending upon the issue--they have the excuse of ignorance. But for a Catholic who has been instructed, to descend from his dignity of child of God, to be mixed up with the schemes of worldlings, there can be no excuse whatever. If the young people who leave Catholic schools with honor, felt their dignity as Christians, and applied themselves with ardor to the fulfillment of their vocation, an altered tone of public sentiment would soon attest the presence of their influence. St. Philip of Neri said that twelve disinterested, devoted men, might at any time convert the world. If all educated Catholics were devoted to God, and detached from the world, what might we not expect from the influence of their example upon the country?

218.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, January 24, 1878 (5)

[A Catholic Public Opinion]

It would be useful to form, in every congregation of the country, a Catholic public opinion on certain moral subjects. It is true, Catholics cannot be up to the level of Puritan civilization, wherein the code is "Thou shall not be found out doing anything disreputable." But still there are very many calling themselves Catholic, over whom a healthy Catholic public opinion would have a very wholesome influence. Let us instance:

1. The mass in every congregation look upon the pastor as the ambassador of God. Their respect for his sacred character prevents any particular inspection of his personal qualities. To them he is the offerer of the Mass, the dispenser of the Sacraments. But there are also in every congregation a few to whom the pastor is an adventurer, come to make a living of them, a few silly young people who observe and discuss his physical appearance, his walk, dress and manner of speaking. These people simply wait to see what profit or amusement they can derive from the priest. Now in every congregation the public opinion of those who have faith might be concentrated, so as to awe into silence, or drive to where they belong, the whited sepulchres to whom piety is nothing and the success of the Church among them a mere source of gain or of

entertainment.

2. There should be concentrated Catholic public opinion on the practice of cursing and blaspheming. Profane people often excuse themselves on the ground of company and habit; so that if it were made the fashion among Catholics to abhor the abominable practice, and taboo those who indulge in it, it would be wiped out.

In like manner could the extirpation of the vices of drinking and hanging around houses of riot and sin be accomplished. Let the real Catholics of every congregation be united and outspoken for both faith and virtue, and a great change for the better will follow.

219.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, Oct. 3, 1878 (2)

[Enjoyment and Suffering]

Enjoyment is not forbidden by the Church. Unlawful enjoyment is forbidden, and so is the love of enjoyment for its own sake. But the cross is recommended. The wisest of all, when joy was proposed to Him, of His own choice "bore the cross." Even worldly experience bears witness to the wisdom of suffering. No great achievement, no immortal renown was ever carried through without suffering.

220.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, Sept. 5, 1878 (2)

[Saint or Devil]

To live in the world and not be of the world is not an easy task. With fear and trembling our salvation must be worked out. So those Catholics who imagine that they are leading good lives, by being attentive to Mass and Vespers and by receiving the Sacraments several times during the year, should spend just a few moments each day in meditation upon how good they ought to be, and they shall soon learn that their faith is not visionary, but something real and alive, that requires daily practice. There is no standstill, either a Catholic becomes a saint or a devil.

221.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, November 11, 1854

The Turning-Point in Life.

Of course, we are no believers in destiny. The doctrine of a blind fate, overruling and irresistible, invented by human pride to shift the responsibility and the shame of crime from the human will, is of course false and blasphemous. But still, we cannot be

blind to the terrible influence exercised on the subsequent life by a true or false step taken at a certain period of our existence. There is a period in the life of every man, when he stands, as it were, on the threshold of two doors, opening the one to heaven, the other to hell, of which he is free to enter either. If he enters one, the other is closed on him; and though it is not impossible, yet is it highly improbable that he ever will return there to ask admission.

When this point of life comes for each man, we cannot say. To some it comes earlier, to others later; to some it comes distinct and marked, to others obscure and imperceptible until after its consequences have made it known. But it comes to all.

There is a class of our people in whose career this turning-point is more clearly defined than it is with ordinary men, and to whom a word in time may be of service. These are the young and liberally educated. All young men grow up with much confidence in the world. Christian though they be, they are far from thinking that in renouncing the world, they made profession of distrusting its doctrines, detesting its maxims, keeping aloof from it as something hateful and doomed to wrath. To them all is gold that glitters, even though the glitter be but a sparkle of their own fancy. The glory of the world's heroes thrills them as though it were a real glory; its enterprises engage them as if important; its usages command their respect as though really venerable; its maxims are embraced by them as if not shallow and false; and *sub specie boni*, they love the world. As time passes, however, they begin to see that they cannot serve God and mammon. They arrive at a point in which religion and the world are at open practical conflict, and the question must be decided--which shall I serve? That point is the turning-point of their life. In this country and in this age political ambition is very often the source of open war between religion and the world in the individual. In such the conflict has two aspects. One class of political aspirants find the reputation of Catholic a draw-back to their success; and another class fall in love with theories and associates incompatible with the observance of their Christian duties. If the first renounce their ambitious hopes, and the second their theories and associates as soon as they discover them to be in opposition to virtue, they are safe; if not, they are, humanly speaking, lost. Give free rein to ambition but once, in this country of excitement, and the rest of life is one giddy whirl, one wild succession of elation and depression, hope and fear, triumph and despair, until death steps in to close the scene.

How many Catholics, brought up in the fear of God, who in their young days have often said the rosary--often partaken of the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar--often resolved rather to die than offend God--who never fell into gross vices--have found in the hopes of political preferment a ruin as complete and as effectual as could be imagined in the habitual violation of every one of the Ten Commandments! Alas! his is a dreary lot whose ambition has led him to place his last end on earth! Yet dreary as it is, it is too frequent. Its beginning is the free choice of the will to follow an unlawful

course--its end is death.

222.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, December 28, 1861

The Turning Point of Life.

Among the mysteries that shroud the life of every human soul is this: that out of the unnumbered moments of its trial-time there is one which is decisive--one in which the door of eternity stands quivering on its hinges ready to open and shut either way, but which once passed takes away all hope of change. To some this moment is the last one of life. To others it comes long before the last great struggle. There is no predetermining and ever-ruling fate in it. The will chooses freely, and goes into the home of its *own* eternity. Yet human life is so mixed up of good and evil that none but God can tell which bad choice is the presage of reprobation, or which good one is the first of the series whose end is life, and to us, who know not what God knows, it seems almost like destiny.

Those who have thought over their own spiritual history can scarcely fail to remember an event of their lives which has given its coloring to all their subsequent acts, and those who have watched over the development of the young cannot fail to have seen in many cases this fatal and seemingly final choice come in, mocking human foresight and baffling human prudence. What sudden and unaccountable changes we see in those who are ripening under our eye! The child of benediction, meek, gentle, modest, ingenuous, all at once becomes stubborn, forward, wanton, hypocritical; and the example of perversity changes, in a night, into the self-possessed, straightforward, exemplary model for all acquaintances. We look in vain for the influence by which these changes have been wrought in outward circumstances. It was the choice made in the depths of the soul that produced it. The good child reached its turning point in life and met a grace it did not second, and so commenced a downward career. The bad child had a light which it received, and since then has been going on toward the perfect day. The change which flashed upon you in a moment may have been going on for months--but it really was the work of a moment, the result of a single choice.

Let no one despise then any grace of God, or use lightly his tremendous power of choosing between good and evil. The present moment may be the turning point of an unending life.

223.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, October 7, 1876 (1)

Correcting our Faults

With the fall of Adam and Eve, man became prone to sin. He became liable to fall at any time, if God's grace would not protect him from evil temptations; so that we must consider that we are but flesh and blood, liable to the moral and physical ills we inherit. God is merciful, and the creatures He has made and those who drink from the divine fountain of mercy are ready and willing to forgive those who cherish the true essence of repentance, sorrow for past transgressions and good resolves for the future. This class ever find forgiveness. But when we see one who, cognizant of his own crimes, flies in the face of God, assumes a false innocence before men, and is unwilling to correct his bad habits, the measure of mercy must be withheld. If you have a fault, acknowledge it, pray God for mercy and aid, strive hard and long, then your evil deeds of the past will become a blank page in God's sight and man's.

224.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, March 4, 1876 (1)

[Wearing vs. Taking Our Lord's Yoke]

"The yoke of Our Lord is easy and His burthen is light" to those who put it squarely on their shoulders. To others it is painful and heavy. Compared to the eternal, the temporal is in reality nothing. What to Abel, the Just, is it now, that he was set upon by his brother and beaten to death? What to Cain is it that he was successful in gratifying his savage instincts by his deed of murder?

The glory and pleasures of earth wither and the tomb covers them up; but the seekers after them live on eternally after the disenchantment. To one who has faith, all his possessions and connections and surroundings are valued as means to save his soul. Outside of that end they are no more than a sick man's dreams. Of course, this view is not taken once for all. It must be renewed daily, and even hourly when the life is active. Once resolving to give yourself to God, and afterwards forgetting to make the oblation clean, is what makes scandalous priests and disedifying religious. These *wear* the yoke but do not "take" it. They carry the burthen and find it heavy. They are like rowers, going one way and gazing the other. Religion is not life to them, but restraint. They aim not at faith, but not to depart from it. They want to keep out of hell but have no pleasure in seeking heaven.

The world, on the other hand, accepts temporal things as a finality. To revel and domineer is accepted by all so-called practical men, as the end of man--his highest.

225.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, Sept. 18, 1875 (2)

[The Prudence of the Serpent]

The simplicity of the dove is more to be desired among Catholics of our times, than the prudence of the serpent--the capacity of having, and imagining, evil motives, of guarding against them by double dealing and false pretense, the habit of using language to conceal thought, of saying not what is true but what will put the listener in your power, is too common already. Parents practice it when they smile welcome in the face of those whom the children heard them say they hoped not to see that day.

Children practice it when they say "yes" or "no" to suit the form and tone of the questioning and not the true state of the case. Religious people practice it when they say, "We need not mention that to the spiritual director;" priests, when they get up a public opinion among themselves throwing odium on any one who tells the truth to their bishop; and bishops, should they hesitate to refer doubtful things to the Holy Father. We in America have plenty of short-sighted prudence. We are almost in the condition of the Romans after the Empire became Christian, when men fled to the Egyptian deserts in order to save themselves from the universal corruption.

So few acknowledge the supreme dominion of Jesus Christ over them! Engaged in enterprises of zeal and charity, they do not throw themselves on His care for the outcome of them, but resort to artifices and even uncharitable rivalries to secure their ends, and often accept the world's applause over their success as a compensation for the sacrifice of peace of mind and conscience they have made in attaining it. When shall we learn the lesson, "The truth shall make you free." All freedom that comes from self-conceit and passion and vain glory is a mockery of the name. He alone is free who believes in Jesus Christ, and believing has no aim but to shape his life according to the Redeemer's teachings.

226.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, November 19, 1853

Religion in Every Day Life.

Catholics ought always to be characterized by the firmness of their faith. God has granted them infallible certainty of the truth of what they believe. They ought therefore to consider their religion, not as something apart from their daily temporal occupations, to be thought of on Sundays and holidays of obligation, but as an every day concern. It should be a leaven to quicken the whole mass of their ordinary actions, a salt to give savor to all they do, or say, or think. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do," says the apostle," do all for the glory of God."

It is a defect of Protestant customs, too easily imbibed by us who are in daily contact with Protestants, to separate religion from common life. From the lower and less dignified sects which make religion a thing to be "got," when the imagination is excited by the tumult and enthusiasm of "revivals" and "camp meetings," to the more refined and intellectual bodies that think religion an affair of Sunday, and not to be profaned by admixture with business of week days, all of them separate religion from *life*.--Hence religion is a cold, dreary thing. The thoroughfares of business are not hallowed by its influence, the innocent mirth of the social fireside is frozen at its approach, and the gladness gushing from the heart of youth and innocence, is saddened by its contact.

And this false view of religion is, sometimes, unconsciously imbibed by Catholics. Catholics sometimes learn to look upon their faith as a restraint upon their amusements, an impediment to their progress in business. They concede that its, to them, irksome duties must be complied with, and they comply with them hurriedly in order to be rid of them, and at ease again.

Now this is a false view of religion, as any one who reflects a moment can easily perceive. Religion is the means to conduct us to the end of our being--to the highest happiness of which our nature is capable. And as we are never so happy in this life as when engaged in the pursuit of our own happiness, it follows that the practice of religion in all our action is our pleasantest employment. Religion ought therefore to be carried into all our business and all our recreations. It ought to fill all our affections, be the guide of our desires, the aim of all our hopes and plans. No one can tell the beautiful effect produced in the heart penetrated and altogether filled with the Catholic religion.--How it softens the griefs, chastens the joys, banishes the melancholy, sweetens the pains by which that poor heart is tossed to and fro in this changeful life! How from the depths of that heart, its sweetness gushes up and is diffused abroad in social life, rendering sweet the fireside chat of the family circle, joyous the meeting of neighbors and friends!

But not only ought it to leaven all our words with charity, and cheerfulness; it should also be seen in our external actions. This is natural. He who feels strongly, or rather believes firmly, and conceals his feelings, resists, whether for a good or bad reason, the promptings of nature. Hence, religion, piety, and reverence for holy things, will appear in our outward actions, if our faith be deep and unshackled by mannerism. The Church has provided for this manifestation of interior piety, by the manifold practices of her beautiful ceremonial. Temples, altars, images, pictures, holy water, are the language, with which the Church teaches her children to express the emotions of nature illumined by faith; and we have little confidence, if not in the sincerity, at least in the good sense of those Catholics who pride themselves on using these exteriorities as little as possible. In Catholic countries, like Italy, every family has its little altar, with

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the lamp burning before the *Madonna*. The cross is planted along the highways, and pictures of the saints are fastened to the trunks of trees, in the fields. On the crest of the mountain, the symbol of our redemption greets the traveller's eye, and children gather flowers in the forest, to set before the print of the Blessed Virgin hidden in the depth of the almost unvisited glen. And this, not because "the people are ignorant and superstitious," as infidel travellers flippantly say, but because the people *believe*, and, in expressing the veneration toward God, and those whom God loves, springing from their faith, seeks not a cautious language to disarm the scoffer, or to escape the misconstruction of the calumniator, but speak right out with spontaneous enthusiasm, in the modes that nature dictates.

So ought it to be, religion ought to fill not only the highways, but also the byways of life. It ought to pervade, not only our hearts, our thoughts, and our affections, but all our outward actions, permeating, controlling, vivifying them all.

227.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, July 31, 1875 (5)

How to Bear Calumny

It is trying to have our real faults trumpeted about and commented on, but it is still more painful to have faults charged on us that are not ours, views and aims which we abhor attributed to us. We Catholics are, just now, under the necessity of bearing this last load. In a political canvass, in which victory for either party is no success to us, we are dragged into stump speeches and partisan writings, and it has become the interest of one party to abuse us and of the other not to defend us.

The first thing to teach us patience under calumny is to look to the end. Think how these tyrants of the tongue and pen, who now put truth to one side and glorify themselves, will, in a few years, be crawling in the dust at the foot of the Judge, confessing their perfidy, and saying, "Therefore we have erred!"

The second is to remember our vocation and with whom we hold fellowship. A Christian, says Tertullian, is another Christ. The preachers, free thinkers, news mongers and rabble of His time had no consideration for Him, but scoffed, and beat and crucified Him. The disciple is not above his Master. He suffered meekly for our sins. Can we not suffer for them ourselves?

The third is that the Church will grow under this calumny, in two ways--in the lopping off of those dead members who are a scandal to ourselves, but who, in the face of the storm, will deny the faith in words, as they have already denied it in works; and in the diffusion of right knowledge among honest non-Catholics, who will be led by the virulence of calumny to inquire, "Are these things so?" Let us arm ourselves with patience, therefore, and look forward calmly to the time when churches and shrines will

overlook the dishonored graves of these persecutors, as they do now the tombs of the Cæsars.

228.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, October 28, 1876

[Proper use of Money]

The proper moral value of money is not generally understood. We are not to love it too much nor yet be prodigal with it. The man who seeks it as an employment, as the support of his family and the education of his children, as a means of increasing his influence in doing good and consequently as an assistant in saving his soul, does well. Whoever uses money simply to gratify his passion of pride, luxury, avarice, impurity or drunkenness is guilty of sin. All men should provide for the rainy day by economy and industry. An aged parent does not find a few dollars a serious inconvenience no matter how affectionate his children. No rents, salary or hopes of a legacy are so certain that want may not come some time. A worn out priest, even, can find opportunities of doing good no matter how rheumatic or asthmatic he be, if he have a few dollars in his old age.

Some men, especially young men, look upon it as a sort of virtue to spend all they earn. By such conduct they learn extravagant habits--drinking, smoking, buggy-riding, flashy dressing. These men seldom marry, though that is their vocation, and become most corrupt. Others only think of increasing their stock. They bind up their bowels to all men; they have no help for the poor; no offering to God. They neglect the proper education of their children because it *costs*; they deprive themselves and their family of their proper position in the world because it costs. They shrink from prominence in any church matters because they fear a draw on their pockets. These last practically make a God of their money. Christians should live soberly, purely, frugally, using the world as though they did not use it, with an eye to the day when they shall be required to give an account of their stewardship.

229.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, September 23, 1876 (1)

[To Labor is no Shame]

No fashion of thought can be more opposed to the spirit of Christianity than the prejudice that to work is a burthen and a misfortune. Sin made it heavy and wearisome. But in the state of innocence Adam was put in Eden, "that he might till the soil." To work wearies us; but not to work wearies us still more. Nor is there any kind of labor which it is a shame for a Christian to do. The Apostles caught fish and sold

them. The Blessed Virgin spun and wove, cooked, swept, and washed dishes and clothes. St. Joseph was a carpenter. St. Paul made tents. St. Bonaventura was in the kitchen when the cardinal's hat was brought him, and told the messenger to lay it on the chair until he had the dishes cleaned. In monasteries the division of labor was made among the brethren, according to physical and moral ability, and not because some offices were dignified and some menial. Servants were not hired people, but "familiares," members of the family. The distinction of kinds of labor, making styles and ranks, is purely Pagan. It is just as noble to sweep a house as to measure cloth or count bank bills, or write books if it happens to be just as necessary, according to the spirit of the Catholic Church. What we do matters little. How we do it is the whole question. Star differs from star in glory; but every star is full of light. If the task is well and uprightly done, it will have the same reward, whether it is done with hand or brain.

230.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, May 28, 1853 (1)

Spiritual Rappings.

"Spiritual manifestations" are becoming a startling feature of our American Society. There are several newspapers printed under the editorial direction of spirits. A multitude of books has issued from the press, giving direct information of "matters and things" in the other world. Our insane asylums have become the abodes of several distinguished men, from whom spirits have driven the wits. The National Intelligencer has been obliged, by the high standing of the man, to admit into his columns a prolix vindication of spiritual rappingism, written by a U. S. Senator.

The rappings are, therefore, *something respectable*. What are we to say about them?--In the first place, lest any of our readers be ignorant of what *are* spiritual rappings, we will promise all we know about them. There is a class of men, women, or children called *mediums*. Three girls from Rochester were the first to commence the business. These, when visited and requested, by some process, call up the spirits from the "vasty deep," who, being present, answer any questions propounded to them, by rapping on the floor, table, &c, of the room. Sometimes, the "spirits," at the bidding of the mediums, transport articles of furniture from one part to the other, of the apartment, showing in the transportation an *intelligent* actor.

These and many other effects in material nature, produced by causes not explained in natural science, and apparently *intelligent*, are "spiritual rappings." What shall we say of them?

1. We do not deny *all* the facts. Some of them, no doubt, are "delusions," others "impostures." But some appear undeniable.

2. It is not necessary to account for the *true* facts by "natural" or *material* causes.

Some persons seem to think that we must find some "rapping fluid," or some phase of electricity, that will move tables, and answer questions, or else be left to the alternative of being "superstitious." This is not true. There are in the universe other existences besides *matter* and *man*. God is; angels are, good and bad. It is no "superstition" to attribute an effect to an adequate cause, whether material or spiritual. We need not then search for a rapping fluid.

2. The "spiritual rappings" are, either effects proportionate to material causes, or they are not. If they are, let them be examined by men of science, and explained. If not, they come from God, or from good or bad angels. From whichever of these three sources they come, we need not be anxious about them, or fear that they will bring to light anything *new*, or contrary to what we believed always.

If they come from God, they will be in accordance with the moral and dogmatical teaching of the Church, since God, having already by miracles, made Himself the voucher of her veracity, cannot now, by miracles, contradict her.

If they are from good angels, they will always be done to nourish the faith, piety or devotion of the people, and hence are not to be feared. If, finally, they proceed from the bad angels, they will always be in subjection to the will of God, and consequently can never deceive or harm those who do not will to be harmed. That God *has* permitted evil angels to produce extraordinary effects on material nature, there can be no doubt. But they were and always must be accompanied by signs of their diabolical origin. The "cloven foot" must "stick out." The first of the signs is, whether what they say, is in accordance with morality and with the teachings of the Church. If it be not, it is diabolical, certainly. So that whatever hypothesis be taken to account for spiritual rappings, the humble Catholic has no fear of being "imposed upon" or "deluded." He knows whence he came into this darksome world, whither he is going. He knows the end of his being, the *means* of acquiring that end, the impediments to its attainment. His path is clear through the wilderness, for the sun of an infallible faith shines over it. No new inventions, no discoveries in history, geology, archaeology--no strange facts of spiritual rappings, or magnetism or mesmerism startle him from the "even tenor of his way." God is above him, eternity before him; heaven awaits him; the commandments "nigh to him," plain and simple. "This do, and thou shalt live." He has but to do what he knows he ought, and his destiny is fulfilled.