

Matters of Faith by Fr. Michael Muller, 1880

Are we bound to profess this faith openly?

Yes, whenever the glory of God and the spiritual welfare of our neighbor require it; for Christ says: "Every one that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven. But he that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven." (Matt, x, 32, 33.)

It is not enough to believe in our heart the truth of the Catholic Church. We are also bound, under pain of sin, to make an open profession of our religion. To deny our faith through human respect or false shame, to blush at the truths of the Gospel and the practices of Catholic piety, to disavow before men what we believe in our hearts, is to commit a grievous sin, and to bring down on ourselves the severest chastisements of heaven, as we learn from our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He has told us in plain words: "Whoever shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven." In every age, the Church of Christ has considered the external denial of faith a most grievous sin, and has condemned as heretics all those who declared that, under certain circumstances, the denial of faith was lawful, and has even inflicted very severe penalties on those who, during the ages of persecution, denied their faith to save their lives; for, to deny the faith externally in a matter of the greatest importance is in itself a grievous sin; it is to reject openly as a falsehood what one believes in his heart to be the truth revealed by God.

Moreover, not only is a denial of our religion either by words or signs a grievous sin; but all dissimulation, by which others may think that we have denied that faith, is, too, a great sin. At the time of St. Cyprian, there were some weak Catholics who, in order to escape persecution, procured for money an attestation from the magistrates that they had complied with what the persecuting laws required of them, though in reality they had not. On account of such dissimulation, those weak Catholics were looked upon by the Church as traitors to their religion, and as such they were not allowed to assist at Mass and receive the sacraments until, by a long and severe penance, they had endeavored to expiate their crime, and to satisfy for the scandal which they had given. No matter how firmly we may be convinced in our hearts of the truth of our "religion and Church," if we deny it outwardly, by word, sign, or action, we can never "expect salvation while in that state." The Holy Scriptures are clear and explicit on this point. In addition to the text quoted in the above answer, Christ says in St. Luke: "He that shall deny me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God." (St. Luke xii, 9.) On this authority of Christ, St. Paul declares the same truth as a "faithful saying," and commands his disciple Timothy, and in his person all the pastors of God's Church, to preach and inculcate the same truth to their people. "A faithful saying . . . if we deny Him, He also will deny us . . . These things admonish and testify in the Lord." (2 Tim. ii, 11, 12, 14.) From these words it evidently follows that, to deny Jesus Christ, and consequently to deny His faith or His Church, is a sin of the blackest dye, and one that, on the last day, will call down on us that dreadful sentence: "I know ye not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." (Luke xiii, 27.)

It cannot be said that the foregoing passages from our Lord and St. Paul apply only to the denying of Christ, and not to the denial of the faith and of the Church. That the denial of faith is included in these texts, and considered the same as denying Christ, is manifest from the following express declaration of Christ himself: "He that shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also will be ashamed of him, when He shall come in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels." (Mark viii, 38.) In this text it is stated in the plainest terms that to be ashamed, not only of Christ, but also of His words, that is, of His doctrine, of His religion, and consequently of His Church,--the depository of that faith,--is a mortal sin, and will entail on the soul eternal damnation. But if "to be ashamed" of Christ and his faith will damn the soul, how much more "the denying" of Christ and his faith? Nothing, therefore, should ever induce us to be guilty of so base a crime as is the betrayal of our faith. We must always be ready to lay down our lives sooner than to deny the faith of the Catholic Church.

There are two cases in which, in particular, we are obliged to make an open profession of our holy religion. These two cases are the honor and glory of God, or the spiritual welfare of our neighbor. If, for instance, a Catholic is called upon by public authority, whether just or unjust, to give an account of his religion, he should

make an open profession of it; for, to be unwilling then to maintain or defend it through pride, human respect or worldly motives, that is, lest we should be contemned by others, or be laughed at by worldlings, is a great insult to Jesus Christ, a betrayal of our duty to him; is a preferring of what men may think of us to His approval, and is to be afraid of men more than of God. "Human respect and worldly motives" can never be received by God as an excuse for not making an "open profession" of our belief when we are bound to make it; for, concealing it through such unworthy motives, lest we should meet with any inconvenience, or be considered bigoted or illiberal, is a heinous sin, which God will severely punish hereafter. To be silent, when we are bound to speak out and declare our belief, is no less than to be ashamed of the faith of Christ and of the faith of our Church, and is sacrificing our duty to God to what others may say or think of us.

The honor of God, then, requires us to declare, our faith openly, and not to be ashamed of Christ nor of His words, when we are questioned about our religion before a judge or public magistrate, though such "open profession of our faith" may cost us all we have, or even our very lives. Hence all the holy martyrs, when examined before their persecuting judges, openly confessed their faith in Christ, and rejoiced, with the apostle, to suffer for His name. They suffered death itself in the midst of the most cruel torments, rather than do the smallest thing contrary to their holy faith, or even anything that had the appearance of being contrary to faith. Neither their parents, nor friends, nor love for their country, could prevail upon them to deny their religion. On those occasions they addressed their friends in words like these:

Farewell, dear friends, we now must part,
For God I die with willing heart.
I see sad tears bedim your eye--
Weep not for me! Tis sweet to live, more sweet to die!
Weep not for me! Fond hearts, farewell!
Soon shall our grief be o'er:
In heaven we'll meet once more!

Farewell, dear land, that gave me birth,
My home, the dearest spot on earth!
Kind friends, bear home my parting sigh:
"For God to live is sweet; more sweet, more blest to die!"
Farewell, green hills, bright skies, farewell!
O scene surpassing rare!
But heaven is far more fair!

Farewell, fond mother! Bless thy child!
Farewell, dear father, good and mild.
Rejoice with me; repress each sigh,
And pray that I may falter not, may bravely die!
Farewell, fond hearts--farewell, farewell!
A crown of heavenly light
Gleams o'er me dazzling bright!

For over three hundred years the Irish people have suffered, struggled, and died for the faith. They suffered poverty with all its bitterness, they endured exile with all its sorrows, they suffered outrage and even death itself, rather than lose their God. The minions of hell enacted the fiendish penal laws, and soon that country, so rich and fruitful in colleges and convents, became one vast, dreary wilderness. In tracts of country, thirty, forty, fifty miles in extent, the smoke from an inhabited house, as English chroniclers themselves declare, was nowhere to be seen. The people had disappeared and left only skeletons in the land. The living were to be met only in the glens and dark caves of the mountains. There they dragged out a wretched existence, feeding on the weeds and garbage of the earth. Like shadows they moved about, haggard and wan, starving and wounded, and

they endured the cruel pangs of hunger, till God, in His mercy, took them to a better world. Again and again were these harrowing scenes repeated. Ireland became prosperous again in spite of the most galling oppression; and the people of Ireland were again starved and massacred for their faith, and those that survived were shipped off to the British West Indies, and sold there as slaves. The British fleet was ordered around the coast. Over eighty thousand of the most influential and most distinguished of the Irish Catholics were packed on board, and their bones have long since rotted in the soil of the English sugar-plantations of Jamaica.

The last effort of tyranny is still fresh in the minds of many – I mean the late famine years. There are, no doubt, some of my readers who have witnessed the appalling scenes of that gloomy period, and, once witnessed, they can never, never be forgotten. Ah! no. Like living fire, these horrid scenes burn into the memory, and leave there a horrid scar--a mark that can never be effaced. There were thousands and thousands wasting away and dying of hunger. They were falling and dying as the leaves fall in autumn. The food that was sent to the poor people from America was kept in the harbors until it rotted. And there, in the sight of the famishing people, the wealthy Protestant, the overfed wives and daughters of the sleek, oily Protestant parsons, had plenty of food for their cattle, they had food in abundance for their pet birds or their lapdogs, whilst the poor starving Catholics wished to even eat the husks of the swine, and it was not given them.

A few years before the gloomy reign of terror, there lived near a certain town in Ireland a poor, honest farmer with his wife and children. They were poor, indeed, but yet they were contented and happy. Never did the poor or the stranger pass their door without partaking of their hospitality; and what they had, they gave with a willing heart. But the famine year came on. The good farmer was unable to pay the tithes. His little property was distrained. The police entered his farm; they seized his unreaped corn; they took away his crops; they drove his cattle to the pound. The poor unhappy man himself was expelled from that little spot of earth on which he was born, where he had lived so long, and where he had hoped to die. He was turned into the public road with his wife and children. No roof, no food, no clothing he was cast in beggary and nakedness into the cold, heartless world. He sought for a shelter for his little ones. He sought for employment, but could find none. He was a Catholic. His neighbors around were bitter Protestants of the blackest dye. They offered him shelter, food, and clothing, but on one condition – that he would apostatize.

O God! who shall tell the agony of that poor, heartbroken father? No hope to cheer him save the hope of death; no eye to pity him save the all-merciful eye of God! He saw his poor wife dying before his eyes. He saw her wasting day by day – slowly pining away, while praying and weeping over her starving children; he heard his famished children crying for food, and their piteous cries rent his very soul. Oh! he could help them, he could provide them food, clothing, and a pleasant home – but then he must apostatize, he must renounce his holy faith! Oh! what a sore trial, what a cruel martyrdom! His loving wife died before his eyes – died of hunger. She died with words of patience, words of hope, upon her lips. The poor husband wrung his hands in anguish. He bent over the lifeless form of his wife. Dark night was thickening around him – thickening even within him; he felt the cruel pangs of hunger gnawing at his very vitals. And were he not upheld by his holy faith, he would have yielded to despair.

But the cries of his children aroused him. He forgot for a moment his own sufferings. He took his two weak, starving babes in his trembling arms, and hurried away with tottering steps. He begged from house to house, from door to door; he begged for a crumb of bread for his poor, starving little ones, but no one gave him a morsel of food. They offered him food and clothing and shelter if he would only apostatize, if he would give his children to be brought up in their false creed. “But,” cried the heart-broken father, “oh! how could I give my children to be brought up in a false creed and deny their holy faith? Oh! how could I sell their souls to the Evil One for a mess of pottage?”

After some time the unhappy man felt a heavy load weighing like lead upon his trembling arm. He looked. One of his poor babes had ceased moaning. It was dead – cold and stiff in death. The heart-broken father sat down beneath a tree by the wayside and prayed, but he could not weep. Ah! no; his eyes were dry, his heart was withered. In wild, passionate tones he called on heaven to witness his agony – he called God to witness that he did not wish the death of his children, that he would gladly lay down his life to save his family, but he could not – oh! no! no! – he could not deny his holy faith; he could not sell their souls to the devil. He tried once more to obtain some food for his remaining child, but in vain, and at last the poor innocent sufferer gasped and died too

in his arms. Ah! whose heart can remain unmoved at the sufferings of the Irish Catholics? Whose heart, at the same time, does not rejoice at their constancy in the faith?

When our neighbor's spiritual welfare requires it, we should, too, make open profession of our religion. If, for instance, another is in danger of denying his faith unless he is publicly encouraged or instructed; or, again, when we hear wicked men railing against the Gospel or ridiculing the truths of our religion, and at the same time have well-grounded hopes that, by defending those sacred truths, we shall check the impiety and railing of these unbelievers, and prevent others who are present from being hurt by these impious attacks on religion, it becomes then a duty to profess openly our esteem and veneration for the Gospel truths; for the edification of our neighbor and the honor of God require us to do so.

During the French Revolution a good Catholic, named Repoche, was taken prisoner by the infidel soldiers. They brought him to a place where a large cross had been erected, and said to him: "You have been taken with arms in your hands. Your life is forfeited. See! yonder is the cottage in which you were born: Your father is there waiting for you. Now, your life will be spared, but on one condition." The good soldier cast a longing look at his cottage. He thought of his aged father, he thought of his pleasant home. His brave heart was wrung with emotion, and the blinding tears rolled down his cheeks. "Tell me," he said, "what must I do." One of the infidel soldiers gave him an axe. "Here," said he, "take this axe and cut down that cross, and you shall be set at liberty." The Catholic soldier took the axe and deliberately walked over to the cross. His fellow-prisoners turned away their eyes. They were filled with grief at the thought that one of their number was about to abjure his God – deny his holy faith. Repoche stood at the foot of the cross. He looked around it with a brave and dauntless air, and brandishing the ponderous battle-axe over his head, he cried out in a loud voice: "Death to the wretch that dares insult the cross of Jesus Christ. I shall defend it from dishonor as long as there is strength in this arm, or life-blood in this heart!" With flushed face and flashing eyes, the noble soldier brandished his terrible weapon with such force that no one dared approach him. At last the bloodthirsty soldiers transfixed him with their bayonets; and the brave, noble Catholic, bleeding at every pore, threw his dying arms around the cross, and defended it to his last breath.

Act of Faith

O my God, I believe that Thou art one God in Three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; I believe that Thy Divine Son became man, and died for our sins, and that He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all of the truths which Thy Holy Catholic Church teaches, because Thou hast revealed them, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Indulgence of 3 years. Raccolta 36.

"It is impious to say, 'I respect every religion.' This is as much as to say: I respect the devil as much as God, vice as much as virtue, falsehood as much as truth, dishonesty as much as honesty, Hell as much as Heaven." - Father Michael Müller – *The Church and Her Enemies*.

Fr. Michael Müller C.S.S.R. (1825–1899) was a prolific Catholic writer of the 19th century in the United States. Father Müller always submitted his works to two Redemptorist theologians (as the Redemptorist Congregation's rule required) and to his religious superiors before publication.

Some may ask, 'well isn't this being very stubborn?' The answer is no. Why? Because there is only one truth, that being Jesus Christ. Christ has establish one Church, not many congregations nor religions that all contradict each other when it comes to doctrine and dogma, some going as far as teaching blasphemy and idolatry as we see within Islam, modern Judaism, Hinduism etc. Since false religions are made by Satan himself since he is the father of lies, how can we say we respect falsehood when Christ and His Church alone is the truth? Think about that.

There are not many truths, but one truth. Jesus Christ the Eternal Truth clearly, unmistakably, and definitely founded only ONE Church, the Infallible Catholic Church. Therefore the denominations of Protestantism are heretical, eastern schismatic orthodoxy is heretical, Islam, Mormonism, Jehovah witnesses, and modern

Judaism is blasphemous, and Hinduism, Buddhism, Wicca, Satanism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Voodoo, and any other religion that worships a false god is idolatrous, henceforth false and cannot be respected.

†††JMJ†††

Father Muller was one of the most widely read theologians of the nineteenth century. This article was first published in 1875.

1. Do all admit that the Catholic Church is the first and the oldest Church, and, consequently the Church established by Jesus Christ?

That the Catholic Church is the first and oldest and consequently the Church established by Jesus Christ, is and must be admitted by all, because it is a fact clearly proven by Scripture and by history.

2. Who bear witness to this fact?

The Jews and the Gentiles bear witness to it, and even Protestants themselves acknowledge it, because, if asked why they call themselves Protestants, they answer:

“Because we protest against the Catholic Church.”

3. What follows from this answer?

That the Catholic Church is older than Protestantism; otherwise they could not have protested against her.

4. If we go still farther back and ask the Greeks how they came into existence, what will be their answer?

The Greek Church must answer: “We began by separating from the Catholic Church in the ninth century.”

5. What follows from this?

That the Catholic Church existed for eight hundred years before the Greek Church began, and consequently, it is older than the Greek Church.

6. If we thus go back to the very days of the Apostles, what do we find everywhere in regard to the manner in which religious sects arose?

If we go back to the days of the Apostles, we find that every sect separated from the Catholic Church, and therefore we see Calvinists, Kilhamites, Quakers, Shakers, Panters, Seekers, Jumpers, Reformed Methodists, German Methodists, Wesleyan Methodists, Baptists, Particular Baptists, Hardshell Baptists, Softshell Baptists, Forty-Gallon Baptists, Sixty-Gallon Baptists, Mennonites, Millerites, Universalists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Mormons, Christian Perfectionists, etc., etc., etc.

7. Is it not all the same to God whatever religion a person professes?

If it were all the same to God whatever religion a person professes, God would not have forbidden, in the First Commandment, to worship Him in any other than in the true religion. Nor would Christ have solemnly declared: “He who will not hear the Church let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.” (Matt. 18:17.)

8. Who, then, will be saved?

Christ has solemnly declared that only those will be saved who have done God’s will on earth as explained, not by private interpretation, but by the infallible teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. “Not everyone,” says Christ, “who saith to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of My Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 7:21.) The will of the heavenly Father is that all men hear and believe His Son, Jesus Christ. “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him.” (Luke 9:35.)

Now Jesus Christ said to His Apostles and to all their lawful successors: “He that heareth *you* heareth *Me*, and he that despiseth *you* despiseth *Me*, and he that despiseth *Me* despiseth *Him*, the heavenly Father, that sent *Me*.” Hence all those who do not listen to Jesus Christ speaking to them through Saint Peter and the Apostles in their lawful successors, despise God the Father. They do not do His will, and therefore heaven will never be theirs.

9. Must, then, all who wish to be saved, die united to the Catholic Church?

All those who wish to be saved, must die united to the Catholic Church. For out of her there is no salvation, because only she teaches what Jesus Christ requires of everyone to be saved, and because only to her did Christ leave the means to obtain all the graces necessary for salvation. Hence Jesus said to His Apostles and to all their lawful successors: “Go and teach all nations: teach them to observe *all things whatsoever* I have commanded you. He that believeth not all these things shall be condemned.”

Our Divine Savior says: “No one can come to the Father, except through Me.” If we then wish to enter heaven, we must be united to Christ – to His [Mystical] Body, which is the Church, as Saint Paul says. Therefore outside the Church there is no salvation.

Again, Jesus Christ says: “Whoever will not hear the Church, look upon him as a heathen and a publican,” a great sinner. Therefore outside the Church there is no salvation.

Holy Scripture says: “The Lord added daily to the Church *such as should be saved*.” (Acts 2:47.) Therefore the Apostles believed and the Holy Scriptures teach that there is no salvation out of the Church.

10. *What did Saint Augustine and the other Bishops of Africa, at the Council of Zirta, in 412, say about the salvation of those who die outside the Roman Catholic Church?*

“Whosoever,” they said, “is separated from the Catholic Church, however commendable in his own opinion his life may be, he shall for the very reason that he is separated from the union of Christ not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:36.)

11. *What does Saint Cyprian say about the salvation of those who die outside of the Roman Catholic Church?*

Saint Cyprian says: “He who has not the Church for his mother cannot have God for his Father.” And with him the Fathers of the Church in general say that, “as all those who were not in the ark of Noah perished in the waters of the deluge, so shall perish all who are out of the true Church.”

12. *Who are out of the pale of the Roman Catholic Church?*

Out of the pale of the Roman Catholic Church are all unbaptized and all excommunicated persons, all apostates, unbelievers, and heretics.

Infidels and Apostates

13. *How do we know that unbaptized persons are not saved?*

That unbaptized persons are not saved, we know from Christ, Who said: “Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5.) For God cannot unite Himself to such souls in heaven on account of original sin, with which they are defiled.

14. *How do we know that persons justly excommunicated who are unwilling to do what is required of them before they are absolved, are not saved?*

Persons justly excommunicated, who are not willing to do what is required of them before they are absolved, are not saved, because the sin of great scandal, for which they were as dead members expelled from the communion of the Church, excludes them from the kingdom of heaven.

15. *Which Catholics are excommunicated?*

All those Catholics are excommunicated, who are members of secret societies, which have been excommunicated [condemned] by the Church, such as Freemasonry, and other societies affiliated with it under various names.

16. *Why have several Popes solemnly excommunicated all Freemasonry?*

All Freemasons have been solemnly excommunicated by several Popes on account of the main object and spirit of Freemasonry, to establish heathenism or the Church of Satan all over the world:

1. By upsetting governments to obtain for themselves the power of governing and making impious laws for their subjects;

2. By trying to overthrow the Catholic Church, which teaches and maintains the rights and laws of God and civil society;

3. By spreading immoral and impious principles through the infidel press and other satanic means;

4. By establishing public schools for the infidel education of youth.

17. *Is this main object and spirit known to all Freemasons?*

This satanic object and spirit is known only to the members of the highest grades of Freemasonry. But it is sufficiently known to all from the works and speeches of Freemasons, and therefore every member, even of the lowest grade, is guilty of the foul deeds of this satanic society.

18. *How do we know that apostates are not saved?*

Apostates from the Catholic Faith are not saved, because to fall away from the Faith is a great sin, which makes one lose the kingdom of heaven.*

19. How many kinds of infidels or unbelievers are there?

There are three kinds of infidels or unbelievers: (1) Those who are guilty of the sin of infidelity; (2) those who are not guilty of the sin of infidelity, but commit other great sins; and (3) those who are not guilty of the sin of infidelity, and live up to the dictates of their conscience.

20. What kind of infidels are guilty of the sin of infidelity?

All those unbaptized persons are guilty, who do not embrace the true religion, although the truths thereof have been sufficiently made known to them-like many of the Jews of whom our Lord said that they had no excuse for their sins, because He had spoken to them.

All those unbaptized persons are guilty, who have received sufficient light to know the truth, or at least to understand the danger of their position, and the obligation of making diligent inquiries to ascertain and embrace the truth, but neglect to do so.

And all those are guilty of the sin of infidelity, who willfully deny the truth and obstinately resist it.

21. Why is it that positive infidels are not saved?

Positive infidels are not saved because, "positive infidelity, being willful obstinacy, palpable contradiction, and public contempt of divine revelation and of the precepts of the Gospel, is one of the most grievous sins in the sight of God and of His Holy Church," says Saint Thomas Aquinas.

22. Explain the grievousness of the sin of infidelity?

Mortal sin is a deviation from virtue and divine law. The most heinous sin, therefore, is that which separates man from God more than any other. Now, no sin causes a greater separation from God than that of positive infidelity. When the intellect is in error and abandons the knowledge of God, the will follows it and increases in malice in proportion as the intellect turns away from the path of truth, justice, and charity. Each step that such a man takes in the darkness of infidelity, increases the distance that separates him from God. A return from that dangerous course is very difficult, for when the intellect is in error and the will is filled with malice and depravity, all the bonds capable of uniting man to God are torn asunder.

If such men die in this disposition of mind they are infallibly lost, says Saint Thomas. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb. 11:6.)

23. Which kind of infidels are not guilty of the sin of infidelity, but commit other grievous sins?

Those who are not guilty of the sin of infidelity, but commit other grievous sins, are all those unbaptized persons who never had an opportunity of knowing the true religion, or of becoming aware of the obligation of seeking and embracing it, but who do not live up to the dictates of their conscience.

24. Will this class of infidels be lost?

This class of infidels will be lost, not on account of their infidelity, which was no sin for them, but on account of other grievous sins which they committed against their conscience. "For whosoever have sinned without the law," says Saint Paul, "shall perish without the law." (Romans 2:12.)

25. Will those infidels be lost, who are not guilty of the sin of infidelity and live up to their conscience?

Of those infidels who are not guilty of the sin of infidelity and are faithful in obeying the voice of their conscience, Saint Thomas Aquinas says: "If anyone was brought up in the wilderness or among brute beasts, and if he followed the law of nature to desire what is good, and to avoid what is wicked, we should certainly believe that God, by an inward inspiration, would reveal to him what he should believe, or would send someone to preach the Faith to him, as He sent Peter to Cornelius."

Heresy Explained

26. What is the meaning of the word "heretic"?

The word "heretic" is derived from the Greek, and means "a chooser."

27. What is a heretic?

A heretic is any baptized person, professing Christianity, and choosing for himself what to believe and what not to believe as he pleases, in obstinate opposition to any particular truth which he knows is taught by the Catholic Church as a truth revealed by God.

28. How many things, then, are required to make a person guilty of the sin of heresy?

To make a person guilty of the sin of heresy, three things are required:

1. He must be baptized and profess Christianity. This distinguishes him from a Jew and idolater;

2. He must refuse to believe a truth revealed by God, and taught by the Church as so revealed;
3. He must obstinately adhere to error, preferring his own private judgment in matters of faith and morals to the infallible teaching of the Catholic Church.

29. How many kinds of heretics (Protestants) are there?

There are three kinds of heretics:

1. Those who are guilty of the sin of heresy;
2. Those who are not guilty of the sin of heresy, but commit other grievous sins;
3. Those who are not guilty of the sin of heresy and live up to the dictates of their conscience.

30. Who are guilty of the sin of heresy?

Of the sin of heresy are guilty:

1. All those baptized persons, who profess Christianity and obstinately reject a truth revealed by God and taught by the Church as so revealed;
2. Those who embrace an opinion contrary to Faith, maintain it obstinately, and refuse to submit to the authority of the Catholic Church;
3. Those who willfully doubt the truth of an article of Faith, for by such willful doubt they actually question God's knowledge and truth, and to do this is to be guilty of heresy;
4. Those who know the Catholic Church to be the only true Church, but do not embrace her Faith;
5. Those who could know the Church, if they would candidly search, but who, through indifference and other culpable motives, neglect to do so;
6. Those who, like the Anglicans, think that they approach very near the Catholic Church, because their prayers and ceremonies are like many prayers and ceremonies of the Catholic Church, and because their Creed is the Apostles' Creed. These are heretics in principle, for, "The real character of rank heresy," says Saint Thomas Aquinas, "consists in want of submission to the divine teaching authority in the Head of the Church."

31. Why are true heretics lost?

True heretics are lost because by rejecting the divine Teacher – the Catholic Church – they reject all divine teaching, to do which is one of the greatest sins. Hence Pope Pius IX spoke of Protestantism in all its forms as "*the great revolt against God,*" it being an attempt to substitute a human for a divine authority, and a declaration of the creature's independence from the Creator. For this reason Holy Scripture condemns heresy in the strongest terms. "A man," says Saint Paul, "that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, avoid; knowing that he who is such an one is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned by his own judgment." (Tit. 3:10.) And again he says: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema," that is, "accursed." (Gal. 1:8,9.) Saint Paul also classes sects or heresies among the works of the flesh and says that those who do such things, shall not obtain the kingdom of God (Gal. 1:29).

Heretics are lost because they have no divine Faith. "To reject but one article of Faith taught by the Church," says Saint Thomas Aquinas, "is enough to destroy Faith, as one mortal sin is enough to destroy Charity. For the virtue of Faith does not consist merely in adhering to the Holy Scriptures, and in revering them as the Word of God; it consists principally in submitting our *intellect* and *will* to the divine authority of the true Church charged by Jesus Christ to expound them. "I would not believe the Holy Scriptures," says Saint Augustine, "were it not for the divine authority of the Church." He, therefore, who despises and rejects this authority, cannot have true Faith. If he admits some supernatural truths, they are but simple opinions, as he makes those truths depend on his private judgment.

And as divine Faith is the beginning of salvation, the foundation and *source of justification*, and is found only in the true Church, it is clear that there is no salvation for one as long as he is a heretic.

Heresy denies all Faith

32. Have heretics faith in Jesus Christ?

Saint Thomas Aquinas says: "It is absurd for a heretic to say that he believes in Jesus Christ. To believe in a person is to give our full consent to his word and to all he teaches. True Faith, therefore, is absolute belief in Jesus Christ and in all he taught. Hence, he who does not adhere to all that Jesus Christ has prescribed for our

salvation, has no more the doctrine of Jesus Christ and of His Church, than the pagans, Jews, and Turks have.” “He is,” says Jesus Christ, “but a heathen and a publican”; and therefore he will be condemned to hell.

33. *Show how Protestants have no absolute faith in Christ.*

Jesus Christ says: “Hear the Church.” “No,” say Luther and all Protestants, “do not hear the Church; protest against her with all your might.”

Jesus Christ says: “If anyone will not hear the Church, look upon him as a heathen and a publican.” “No,” says Protestantism, “if anyone does not hear the Church, look upon him as an apostle, an ambassador of God.”

Jesus Christ says: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against My Church.” “No,” says Protestantism. “This is false, the gates of hell have prevailed against the Church for a thousand years and more.”

Jesus Christ has declared Saint Peter and every successor to Saint Peter – the Pope – to be His Vicar on earth. “No,” says Protestantism, “the Pope is Antichrist.”

Jesus Christ says: “My yoke is sweet, and my burden light.” (Matt.11:30.) “No,” said Luther and Calvin, “it is impossible to keep the Commandments.”

Jesus Christ says: “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” (Matt. 19:17.) “No,” said Luther and Calvin, “faith *alone*, without good works, is sufficient to enter into life everlasting.”

Jesus Christ says: “Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish.” (Luke 3:3.) “No,” said Luther and Calvin, “fasting and other works of penance are not necessary in satisfaction for sin.”

Jesus Christ says: “This is my body.” “No,” said Calvin, “this is only the figure of Christ’s Body; it will become His Body as soon as you receive It.”

Jesus Christ says: “I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.” (Matt. 19:9.) “No,” say Luther and all Protestants, to a married man, “you may put away your wife, get a divorce, and marry another.”

Jesus Christ says to every man: “Thou shalt not steal.” “No,” said Luther to secular princes, “I give you the right to appropriate to yourselves the property of the Roman Catholic Church.”

34. *Do heretics speak in this manner also of the Holy Ghost and the Apostles?*

They do. The Holy Ghost says in Holy Scripture: “Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.” (Eccles. 9:1.) “Who can say: My heart is clean, I am pure from sin?” (Prov. 20:9.) And, “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Philip. 2:12). “No,” said Luther and Calvin, “but whosoever believes in Jesus Christ, is in the state of grace.”

Saint Paul says: “If I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” (I Cor. 13:2.) “No,” said Luther and Calvin, “faith *alone* is sufficient to save us.”

Saint Peter says that in the Epistles of Saint Paul there are many things “hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as also the other Scriptures, to their own perdition.” (II Pet. 3:16.) “No,” said Luther and Calvin, “the Scriptures are very plain, and easy to be understood.”

Saint James says: “Is anyone sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord” (Chapter 5, verse 14). “No,” said Luther and Calvin, “that is a vain and useless ceremony.”

35. *Now, do you think God the Father will admit into heaven those who thus contradict His Son Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, and the Apostles?*

No; He will let them have their portion with Lucifer in hell, who first rebelled against Christ, and who is the father of liars.

36. *Can a Christian be saved, who has left the true Church of Christ, the Holy Catholic Church?*

No, because the Church of Christ is the kingdom of God on earth, and he who leaves that kingdom, shuts himself out from the kingdom of Christ in heaven.

37. *Have Protestants left the true Church of Christ?*

Protestants left the true Church of Christ in their founders, who left the Catholic Church either through pride or through the passion of lust and covetousness.

38. *What will be the punishment of those who willfully rebel against the Holy Catholic Church?*

Those who willfully rebel against the Holy Catholic Church, will, like Lucifer and the other rebellious angels, be cast into the everlasting flames of hell. “He who will not hear the Church,” says Christ, “let him be to thee as the heathen and publican.” (Matt. 18:17.)

39. *But if a Protestant should say: “I have nothing to do with Luther or Calvin or Henry VIII or John Knox; I go by the Bible,” what would you answer him?*

In that case, you adopt, and go by, the principles and spirit of the authors of heresies, and you change the written Word of God into the word of man, because you interpret Holy Scripture in your own private manner, giving it that meaning which you choose to give it, and thus, instead of believing the Word of God, you believe rather your own private interpretation of it, which is but the word of man. Hence, Saint Augustine says: “You, who believe what you please, and reject what you please, believe yourselves or your own fancy rather than the Gospel.”

Inculpable ignorance

40. *Which Protestants are not guilty of the sin of heresy, but commit other great sins?*

Those who are Protestants without their fault and who never had an opportunity of knowing better, are not guilty of the sin of heresy; but if they do not live up to the dictates of their conscience, they will be lost, not on account of their heresy, which for them was no sin, but on account of other grievous sins which they committed.

41. *Will those heretics be saved, who are not guilty of the sin of heresy, and are faithful in living up to the dictates of their conscience?*

Inculpable ignorance of the true religion excuses a heathen from the sin of infidelity, and a Protestant from the sin of heresy. But such ignorance has never been the means of salvation. From the fact that a person who lives up to the dictates of his conscience, and who cannot sin against the true religion on account of being ignorant of it, many have drawn the false conclusion that such a person is saved, or, in other words, is in the state of sanctifying grace, thus making ignorance a means of salvation or justification.

If we sincerely wish not to make great mistakes in explaining the great revealed truth, “Out of the Church there is no salvation,” we must remember:

1. That there are four great truths of salvation, which everyone must know and believe in order to be saved;
2. That no one can go to heaven unless he is in the state of sanctifying grace;
3. That, in order to receive sanctifying grace, the soul must be prepared for it by divine Faith, Hope, Charity, true sorrow for sin with the firm purpose of doing all that God requires the soul to believe and to do, in order to be saved;
4. That this preparation of the soul cannot be brought by inculpable ignorance. And if such ignorance cannot even dispose the soul for receiving the grace of justification, it can much less give this grace to the soul. Inculpable ignorance has never been a means of grace or salvation, not even for the inculpably ignorant people that live up to their conscience. But of this class of ignorant persons we say, with Saint Thomas Aquinas, that God in His mercy will lead these souls to the knowledge of the necessary truths of salvation, even send them an angel, if necessary, to instruct them, rather than let them perish without their fault. If they accept this grace, they will be saved as Catholics.

Other questions

42. *But is it not a very uncharitable doctrine to say that no one can be saved out of the Church?*

On the contrary, it is a very great act of charity to assert, most emphatically, that out of the Catholic Church there is no salvation possible; for Jesus Christ and His Apostles have taught this doctrine in very plain language. He who sincerely seeks the truth is glad to hear it, and embrace it, in order to be saved.

43. *But is it not said in Holy Scripture: “He that feareth God, and worketh justice, is acceptable to Him”?*

This is true. But we must remember that he who fears God, will also believe all the truths that God has revealed, as Cornelius did (Acts, Chapter X). He believes Jesus Christ when He speaks to us through the pastors of His Church. But he who does not believe all the truths that God has revealed, but instead believes and rejects whatever he chooses, does not fear God, and cannot work justice. “He that believeth not the Son of God” – Jesus Christ – “maketh Him a liar,” says Saint John (I John 5:10); and will, on this account, be condemned to hell.

44. *But are there not many who would lose the affections of their friends, their comfortable homes, their temporal goods, and prospects in business, were they to become Catholics? Would not Jesus Christ excuse them under such circumstances from becoming Catholics?*

As to the affection of friends, Jesus Christ has solemnly declared: "He who loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me." (Matt. 10:37.) And as to the loss of temporal gain He has answered:

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" (Mark 8:36.)

45. *But would it not be enough for such a one to be a Catholic in heart only, without professing his religion publicly?*

No, for Jesus Christ has solemnly declared that, "He who shall be ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man shall be ashamed when He shall come in His majesty, and that of His Father, and of the holy angels." (Luke 9:26.)

46. *But might not such a one safely put off being received into the Church till the hour of death?*

To put off being received into the Church till the hour of death is to abuse the mercy of God, and to expose oneself to the danger of losing the light and grace of Faith, and die a reprobate.

47. *What else keeps many from becoming Catholics?*

Many know very well that, if they become Catholics, they must lead honest and sober lives, be pure, and check their sinful passions, and this they are unwilling to do. "Men love darkness rather than light," says Jesus Christ, "because their deeds are evil." There are none so deaf as those that will not hear.

48. *What follows from the fact that salvation can be found only in the Roman Catholic Church?*

It follows that it is very impious for anyone to think and to say that it matters little what a man believes provided he be an honest man.

49. *What answer can you give to a man who speaks thus?*

A man who says, "It matters little what a man believes, provided he be an honest man," I would ask whether or not he believed that his honesty and justice were so great as that of the Scribes and Pharisees in the Gospel. They were constant in prayer; they paid tithes according to the law, gave great alms, fasted twice a week, and compassed the sea and land to make a convert and bring him to the knowledge of the true God.

50. *What did Jesus Christ say of this justice of the Pharisees?*

He says: "Unless your justice shall exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:20.)

51. *Was, then, the righteousness of the Pharisees very defective in the sight of God?*

The righteousness of the Pharisees was most undoubtedly very defective. Their righteousness was all outward show and ostentation. They did good only to be praised and admired by men; but within their souls they were full of impurity and malice. They were lewd hypocrites, who concealed great vices under the beautiful appearance of love for God, charity to the poor, and severity to themselves. Their devotion consisted in exterior acts, and they despised all who did not live as they did. They were strict in the religious observances of human traditions, but scrupled not to violate the Commandments of God.

52. *What are we then to think of those who say: "It matters little what a man believes, provided he be honest?"*

Of those who say this, we think that their exterior honesty, like that of the Pharisees, may be sufficient to keep them out of prison, but not out of hell.

Pius IX answers

53. *But did not Pope Pius IX say that all men, however alienated from Catholic union they remain, are alike in the way of salvation and may obtain life everlasting?*

To this calumnious report of certain newspapers, Pope Pius IX replied: "In our times, many of the enemies of the Catholic Faith direct their efforts towards placing every monstrous opinion on the same level with the doctrine of Christ, or confounding it therewith; and so they try more and more to propagate that impious system of the indifference of religions. But quite recently – we shudder to say – certain men have not hesitated to slander us by saying that we share in their folly, favor that most wicked system, and think so benevolently of every class of mankind as to suppose that not only the sons of the Church, but that the rest also, however

alienated from Catholic unity they may remain, are alike in the way of salvation, and may arrive at everlasting life. We are at a loss, from horror, to find words to express our detestation of this new and atrocious injustice that is done us.

“We love, indeed, all mankind with the inmost affection of our heart, yet not otherwise than in the love of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, Who came to seek and to save that which had perished, Who died for all, Who wills all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth; Who, therefore, sent His disciples into the whole world to preach the Gospel to every creature, proclaiming that those who should believe and be baptized should be saved, but that those who should not believe should be condemned.

“Let those, therefore, who wish to be saved, come to the pillar and the ground of Faith, which is the Church; let them come to the true Church of Christ, which, in her bishops and in the Roman Pontiff, the chief head of all, has the succession of apostolic authority which has never been interrupted, which has never counted anything of greater importance than to preach, and by all means to keep and defend the doctrine proclaimed by the Apostles at Christ’s command.” (Allocution to the Cardinals held on December 17, 1847.)

54. *What conclusion, therefore, should every non-Catholic draw from this conviction?*

From this conviction, every non-Catholic should draw the practical conclusion to become a Catholic. For when there is a question about eternal salvation and eternal damnation, a sensible man will take the surest way to heaven.

*Apostasy, or the falling away from the true Faith, is a kind of infidelity. As the virtue of true faith unites us with God, so the sin of apostasy separates us from Him. As the real loss of faith is a total separation from God and His Holy Church, it is called apostasy or perfidy. Whoever is guilty of this kind of apostasy, is deprived of grace and of all other means of salvation, for, “Faith is the life of the soul: the just man lives by faith.” (Rom. 1:17.) “When the soul, the life of the body,” says Saint Thomas Aquinas, “has left the body, all its natural powers and physical organization begin to be dissolved. In like manner, when true faith, the life of the soul, is totally destroyed, a mortal disorder, a spiritual contagion, pervades all the members and faculties of the body, which are the instruments of the soul.” Hence it is, that the apostate uses every faculty of his soul and body to pervert others, by inducing them to renounce the Faith, which he himself has renounced to his own perdition. “It had been better for them (heretics and apostates) not to have known the way of justice than, after having known it, to turn away from it.” (II Peter 2:21.) “Woe to you ungodly men,” says Holy Writ, “woe to you who have forsaken the law of the Most High Lord! If you be born, you shall be born in malediction; and if you die, in malediction shall be your position. The ungodly shall pass from malediction to destruction; the name of the ungodly shall be blotted out.” (Ecclus. xli: 11-14.)

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