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THE DOCTRINE OF CONVERSION ACCORDING TO Eph. 1, 19. 20 and 2, 1—10.

(From Stoeckhardt's Commentary.)

Eph. 2, 1—10, together with ch. 1, 19. 20, is a section of Scripture which at all times has passed in the Church for the principal *locus Scripturae classicus* on the doctrine of conversion. Accordingly, we shall summarize the dogmatic yield of our exegetical disquisition in the following main points.

1. Conversion is a change, a transformation of the ethical condition and conduct of man, and this change is not rightly understood except when we bear in mind the ethical character and condition of man prior and up to his conversion, *viz.*, the natural, corrupt state out of which we are removed by conversion. We are by nature spiritually dead. That is the leading thought in Eph. 2: *ὄντας νεκρούς*. We are by nature alienated from the life that is of God; we have become dead unto God and unto everything good. Man was originally created for God and for a life in communion with God. The *Apology* says: "The chief distinction in that noble creature, the first man, was a clear light in his heart whereby he understood God and His work, possessed a genuine fear of God, a very cordial trust in God, and in every respect an upright and firm mind, a fine, noble, and cheerful courage toward God and all divine affairs." (Mueller, p. 81.) This concreated righteousness man has lost by the fall. That is original sin, *viz.*, that man by it "has lost these gifts: true knowledge of God,

MISCELLANY.

The "Christian Observer" has for some time been publishing articles by Dr. Gonzalez. In its issue of November 23 it introduces him again, as follows:

Roman Catholics of America have formulated plans for the celebration of their first American Congress in Washington about the first of December. At this Congress they intend, by making a great national show of their strength, which is more apparent than real, to impress and influence American people, especially the politicians. They desire that they shall be regarded as the most numerous denomination in the country, and also the best organized denomination which, through its varied ramifications, can successfully defeat or make victorious a political leader in times of elections. In order that the position of the Roman Catholic Church with regard to the public press may be clearly set forth, we are publishing in this

issue an article by Dr. Juan Orts Gonzalez in which he shows how the public press is dominated by the Roman Catholics. Dr. Gonzalez was formerly a Franciscan friar and a Roman Catholic priest. He renounced his church after a thorough study of its history and doctrine. In the *Christian Observer* of July 27 last, there was published an article under the title, "Why I am a Protestant," in which Dr. Gonzalez gave his reasons for leaving his church.

In his article on the thralldom of the secular press of America, Dr. Gonzalez recounts his experience at Laredo where a libelous pamphlet was handed to people who had attended his lecture. The pamphlet, which bore the approbation of the Roman bishop, abused in unmeasured terms Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Bucer, Beza. Continuing, Dr. Gonzalez says:—

Unsophisticated American Protestants believe that American Catholics know too much of Protestantism to indulge themselves in such false and slanderous language as that quoted above. These certainly overlook the fact that to-day in America ninety per cent. of the teachers in the Catholic universities, academies, colleges, and parochial schools are foreign friars and nuns who come here from Italy, France, Ireland, etc., and bring with them the same methods of instruction and books which they use elsewhere in teaching. I have at hand some of their official text-books in which they speak of Protestantism in the same terms as those quoted above.

Besides that, we have all seen quite recently two famous instances which illustrate our subject wonderfully. Every one who has been reading the *North American Review* attentively of late saw the slanderous denunciation of Methodists in Rome by Archbishop Ireland, and also the answer of Rev. Dr. S. M. Vernon. In the former we find not only rough and impolite language, not only inaccuracies and misstatements, but also principally bitter contempt and even scorn of Roman Methodism, while in the latter we discover the utmost dignity and self-restraint, avoiding everything that might be considered impolite, and particularly manifesting the spirit of tolerance and exhibiting the utmost respect and esteem for Catholics in every line of his Christian and sober answer. We reach the same conclusion if we compare the recent un-American, disrespectful, and tumultuous denunciation by Archbishop O'Connell, of Boston, of Roosevelt, and the calm and temperate vindication of Roosevelt given by the *Outlook*.

And to me the most significant and dreadful fact is that Roman Catholics, notwithstanding their abusive language, obtain a national

hearing, while we Protestants, no matter how politely and reasonably we may speak, are slighted and even disregarded by the public press. Compare the papers which from North to South and East to West reproduced Archbishop Ireland's denunciation of the Methodists, for instance, with the number of papers which reproduced the answer of Dr. Vernon, and you will be amazed at the open partiality of the public press in favor of Roman Catholics.

It is pitiful indeed to say so, but it is absolutely true and must be recognized by every one well acquainted with the facts, that to-day Roman Catholics in America can slander Protestantism and Protestant doctrines and people, using the most abusive and slanderous language, and they find the public press ready to cheerfully reproduce their utterances; and we Protestants cannot even defend ourselves against unjust attacks, unless we use the most mild and respectful language, and even then we never obtain a good national hearing.

And such condition of affairs is more sinister when we consider that within the next thirty years more than forty per cent. of the two millions of Roman Catholic children who are now studying in Roman Catholic schools, academies, colleges, and universities will leave the Roman Catholic faith. Here, as everywhere, the Roman Catholic Church loses more than one-third of her membership in every generation. Anybody in America can test the truth of this statement by comparing the millions of Catholic foreigners who come here with the small remnant of those that the Catholic Church afterwards retains. What will become of those who fall away from Rome? How can they even desire to be Christians according to Protestant standards, since they never have heard anything but slanders and denunciations and misrepresentations of Protestantism? They will surely go to increase the already large number of unbelievers. One of the most dreadful religious problems we meet with is the constant augmentation of unbelief. I do not doubt that more than eighty per cent. of the millions of people who are to-day without religion in America have been either Roman Catholics or in intimate touch with Catholics. Roman Catholics many a time do not succeed in retaining all their followers, but certainly they are always successful in filling them with the deepest scorn for the other Christian denominations. I speak advisedly as a man who has had experience with the system, and can present as illustrations thousands of instances and hundreds of reasons.

I am not a pessimist. Perhaps few Protestants can realize the true position, strength, or feebleness of Catholics as I do on account of my old acquaintance with the high dignitaries of the Roman

Church and her plans in America. I do not hesitate to assert that, though Leo XIII condemned solemnly Americanism in his bull twelve years ago, Americanism is yet living among several prominent American churchmen. And unquestionably millions of native-born Catholics will endorse Protestant principles and methods in the very moment they are able to detect the un-American and sinister policy of true Romanism. But at the same time I am obliged to confess, after having gathered many facts, that to-day the words of such men as Gibbons and Ireland, etc., yes, and more, the goings out and comings in of the most common Roman Catholic bishop, weigh more in the estimation of the public press than any Protestant enterprise or project.

How can it be explained that such a nation as this in which from Washington to Roosevelt almost every great man has been a Protestant and almost every glorious achievement has been accomplished by Protestants, and through Protestantism, is to-day so warmly inclined as a whole in favor of Roman Catholics and disregards so openly Protestants? To answer this question satisfactorily is to me one of the greatest and most vital and pressing of Protestant problems.

I have at hand many documents, some of them perhaps unknown to Protestants, which demonstrate the enormous amount of sagacious work done by Catholics to mislead and control the national thought and press and their tremendous success. I will give frankly the results of my investigations in a series of articles if I can find some reliable papers which will consent to publish them, and I bind myself to make use of Catholic authorities and books, some of which are so secret that even in America they cannot be obtained but by a few influential Catholics.

Alongside of the above we place part of an editorial comment on certain demands of the American Federation of Catholic Societies, which appeared recently in the *Indianapolis News*:—

The Federation further asked that Congress amend the postal laws so as to include within the scope of prohibited literature "books, papers, writings, and prints which outrage religious convictions and contain scurrilous and slanderous attacks upon the faith." This demand is wholly inadmissible. For such a law would make Congress the judge of what the faith was, since, unless it knew this, it could not tell whether it had been unwarrantably attacked. In our opinion, detestable as are the forms of literature protested against, it is far better to allow the faith to take care of itself. We would have as

little censorship as possible in this country, and leave abuse of freedom of the press to be dealt with by public opinion and by the courts. In this country there must be the freest discussion of all subjects, including religion. There might be many discussions of religious questions that would be offensive to the more sensitive church people which Congress would have no right whatever to exclude from the mails. In such cases there are, in free countries, always grave differences of opinion. The matter is one that cannot safely be left to the arbitrament of the government. The power is far too great, and the danger of its abuse is quite as great. Infidels have as good a right as any one else to use the mails, for they are citizens, and they pay taxes. And their discussions are not always marked by the moderation which should characterize all utterances on religious subjects.

But no institution in this land can be shielded by the government from criticism as long as the criticism does not go beyond the limits already fixed by law. These no doubt seem too narrow to the radical brethren. "Scurrilous and slanderous attacks upon the faith," or anything else, are to be deprecated. But they must be dealt with in another way than by government censorship. A decision unfavorable in such a case to the complaining party might involve serious political consequences, and bring into politics influences which ought to be kept out. This government must stand, as it has always stood, for a high morality and righteousness, but as a government it has nothing to do with the faith. Its citizens have many faiths, or, rather, many forms of the same faith, all of which must be treated on an equal basis. But beyond this the government ought not to go.

Never before has Rome shown such bold, brazen impudence in the United States, nor has it ever pushed its unreasonable claims with such aggressive violence. On the other hand, never before has "the land of the free and the home of the brave" witnessed such an exhibition of craven cowardice and fawning servility on the part of its leading journalists and statesmen. The mark of the beast is coming to be worn unblushingly by American Protestants, sons of European ancestors whom Rome slaughtered, hanged, burned, or expatriated. A judgment of God upon faithless Protestantism seems imminent.

The following resolutions may serve a good purpose on occasions similar to that which prompted their adoption at St. Louis in October, 1910:—

Whereas the Prohibition Movement is largely guilty of distorting and of perverting that fundamental principle of complete separation of Church and State as taught by the Savior when He said: "Render unto Caesar" (*i. e.*, the State) "the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's," and of Christian liberty as taught by the inspired Apostle, saying: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink;" and

Whereas the Prohibition Movement at present rampant is largely the outgrowth of legalistic agitation on the part of misguided representatives of hysterical religion which man's wisdom teacheth, but which has no foundation in the Word of God; and

Whereas the Prohibition Movement is plainly in conflict with the Savior's spirit, which condemned sin wherever He found it, but furnished wine at a marriage consecration, and selected wine as an element of His Last Supper:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Conference of Lutheran ministers of the Synodical Conference at St. Louis, Mo., though reprobating with all our might the prevalent abuse of liquor and of the liquor traffic, and though endorsing all proper measures for the betterment and for the prevention of the existing deplorable conditions, do nevertheless for the reasons aforestated declare ourselves against the present Prohibition agitation as such. —

The last two words, "as such," in these resolutions might be dropped, because the authors' idea is fully expressed by the term "present," qualifying "Prohibition." The addition of these words in a hurried reading of the resolutions might convey the meaning that the authors oppose *any* prohibition movement as such, which, of course, they do not. These resolutions do not attack a prohibition movement—which it is possible to conceive—that would be free from all the obnoxious features named above, and with which a Christian, as a citizen, might cooperate without prejudice to his Christian standing and without detriment to his faith.

We append to the above a set of resolutions covering the same subject, which were adopted by the Western District of the Missouri Synod at its Convention at Concordia, Mo., during October, 1910:—

“A campaign for and against prohibition is at present being waged in our State. As a church body we do not intend to participate in this movement; neither do we purpose to dictate to the conscience of our Christians how they are to cast their vote. We believe that Church and State have entirely different functions, and these must not be confused.

“Since, however, various church denominations have dragged religion into this purely political question, and since our Christians in consequence of misinterpretation of Scripture by the Prohibition agitators are perturbed and confused and raise the question, whether or not the use of alcoholic beverages is incompatible with the tenets of Christianity, we hereby desire to state briefly the Bible’s position respecting this important question.

“We declare that the Bible forbids and condemns the abuse of liquor. Prov. 23, 29. 30: ‘Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.’ Prov. 20, 1: ‘Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.’ Eph. 5, 18: ‘And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.’ Rom. 13, 13: ‘Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness.’ Gal. 5, 21: ‘Drunkenness, revelings, and such like, of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.’ 1 Cor. 6, 9. 10: ‘Neither drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.’—The Word of God therefore warns against the abuse of liquor, shows us what fearful woe and misery follow it, and that it ruins man physically, mentally, and spiritually. Yea, the Lord threatens the drunkard with eternal condemnation and the exclusion from His heavenly kingdom.

“On the other hand, the Bible permits and sanctions the judicious and temperate use of liquor.

“We observe our Savior attending a wedding feast where wine was served, and we see Him changing water into real wine, John 2, 1—11. When our Savior partook of the pass-over with His disciples, during which wine was served, He Himself gave the wine to His disciples, as we read Luke 22, 17: ‘And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said: Take this, and divide it among yourselves.’ And thereupon He made use of this wine in the administering of the Holy Supper. The Psalmist (Ps. 104) meditates upon the wonderful providence of God in providing wine, oil, and bread (vv. 14, 15): ‘He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man’s heart.’ The Lord therefore provided wine for the purpose of making glad the heart of man. 1 Tim. 4, 4, 5: ‘Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.’ In the following chapter Paul then says to Timothy (ch. 5, 23): ‘Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.’

“It is therefore clearly a matter of Christian liberty to use wine and other alcoholic beverages, and no one dare say, You sin, if you use it. If anyone would deprive us of this Christian liberty and condemn as a sin the use of spirituous liquors, we retort with St. Paul: ‘Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink,’ Col. 2, 16.

“This liberty, however, does not in any manner justify the existence of offensive and obnoxious saloons and the abuse of the liquor traffic, which are to a large extent responsible for drunkenness and concomitant evils, and which certainly are to be emphatically denounced.”
