

love. The faith-informed love of the Catholic is a contribution to the mutual union which is far superior to the love of the non-Catholic, which is not informed by faith. But it will not long remain so. It will quickly sink to the level of the love with which it is repaid. And not only this, but the faith itself which inspires it will seek the level of that with which it is mated, will grow weaker and weaker, and in many cases finally disappear, and this is the reason why the Church does not like mixed marriages.

Now let it be said in all justice that many partners in mixed marriages are excellent Catholics, but let it be also said that these are the exception, and serve to accentuate the rule. The rule, which cannot be gainsaid, is that the Catholic party in a mixed marriage, so far as external signs go, begins very soon to grow weak in the faith. No matter how fervent and devout before marriage, the Catholic quickly discovers the supposed minimum in the worship of the Almighty, and makes that minimum the rule of life. The general rule of such a Catholic is to be content with the Sunday Mass and to be invariably absent from the Religious Instruction, though under the circumstances no one is in greater need of that instruction. There are many wives of non-Catholics in this country, who in their maidenhood were most fervent and devout, and to whom the Sunday explanation of the Christian Doctrine seem now repugnant.

They lose, too, the Catholic instinct, they show no interest in the things that are vital to the Church and to Catholic life; and in this condition a breath will rob them of the faith, as a breath has robbed many such before. 'I don't wish my children to mix in their schooldays with a class with which they are not likely to mix hereafter,' said the Catholic father of the poor children of a mixed marriage. 'What do you mean by "hereafter"?' asked a priest. 'Do you mean when they grow up or when they are dead?' And the tears that ran in torrents down that poor man's cheeks showed that even still his heart was rent by the consequences of his initial folly.

But it must needs be that mixed marriages come, and so the Church, as we have seen, tolerates them when they become inevitable, even though every such act of toleration makes her own heart bleed afresh. But while she bleeds, she arouses herself to activity and watchful care, and she makes for her poor children such conditions as will be some safeguard to them, and as will prove her own divinity.

If she is the Church of Christ, her primary duty must be to guard well the deposit of faith entrusted to her by her Lord, and to pass it on unbroken and untainted to every successive generation. To neglect this deposit, to hedge it round with no safeguarding conditions, to leave it at the mercy of every man-made sect, would be to condemn herself in the eyes of all, even as the Evangelical churches of Australia and Rabbi Ben Cohen, of the Sydney Synagogue, condemned themselves on the 21st of October, when they declared that marriage belonged to the *sphere of the State*, and that the law of the land in marriage was the marriage law for them. These reverend gentlemen have never been in spirit to the Garden of Eden or to the little village of Cana in Galilee, and their neglect of a primary duty condemns them.

There is no getting behind the argument. If Christianity is divine, the Catholic Church, which alone safeguards it at the fount of human life and makes conditions that secure its blessings to the new-born, is the one and only divine thing upon the earth, the one and only bride of the one Lord of life. All others are upstarts, self-degraded by degrading marriage, and self-condemned by the degradation.

The Church does not make her conditions in secret, but trumpets them forth that all may admire her unparalleled fidelity.

The first condition is:

'That the Catholic party to the mixed marriage be allowed the free exercise of religion.'

This condition is directly in favor of the Catholic party. The non-Catholic must sign a document to this effect, and it must be unconditional and be kept in the

spirit, not merely in the letter. A non-Catholic husband has, as we know, several ways of keeping his wife from Mass, Confession, Communion, and religious instruction, while still keeping to the letter of his promise. But no honorable man will avail himself of such. His sense of honor will uphold him, and if he is wise as well as honorable he will give not only facilities but every encouragement. Wisdom will teach him that a woman who grows less faithful to her God and to the most solemn obligations of her conscience, will not on that account be more faithful to her husband. Fidelity to religion fosters mutual love, but the love that grows without the fostering care of religion, and to manifest which, neglect of the religious instruction, is thought necessary, is not a love from which much may be expected either in time or in eternity.

But the fostering of mutual love is not the chief end of marriage. Husband and wife are united in the bonds of a holy Sacrament, not merely nor chiefly that they may grow in mutual love, but that they may bring forth and educate children for the kingdom of Heaven. Therefore the second condition is:

'That all the offspring are to be brought up Catholics.'

This condition is directly in favor of the children. The great danger for the children in a mixed marriage is that they are likely to be brought up entirely without religion, or at best with a weakly-developed Christian character.

The *New York Messenger* of October, 1902, quotes statistics from the *Review of Reviews* of the preceding December showing the effect of mixed marriages in America. 'Taking as a basis for his computations figures furnished by Chief Statistician Hunt, of the Census Bureau, Mr. C. C. Michener presents the following data: Where the father and mother are both Catholics only eight per cent. of the young men between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five inclusive are not Church members. This is gratifying, especially if we reflect that those who have remained practical Catholics till the age of thirty-five are most likely to remain so all their lives. But now notice the difference. Where one of the parents is a Catholic and the other a Protestant, sixty-six per cent. of the young men do not belong to a Church. The shortest way to the extinction of Catholicity in America is, therefore, the marriage of Catholics with Protestants.'

A census made by the present writer eight years ago showed that there were in his small parish ninety-nine married couples with their families. Fifty-one of the marriages were mixed marriages and forty-eight were Catholic marriages. Out of the children of the Catholic marriages he was unable to discover five who were not regular attendants at the Catholic Church, while out of the fifty-one mixed marriages two hundred and forty-seven children and parents had been absolutely lost to the Church, and these by natural increase must have since grown to one thousand.

It is not necessary to enlarge upon this point; every one knows the fate of the house divided against itself, and every one knows the special difficulties that children will have in becoming ardent and whole-hearted professors of a faith that will be a standing rebuke to one or other of the parents. Therefore it is that for the sake of the poor children, the Church requires the non-Catholic to make a special promise to have these baptised and brought up in the faith and in the Church of Christ.

But now, this non-Catholic, who has made these honorable promises, and who is about to link his life for ever with a Catholic, becomes by this fact an object of interest and affection to Holy Church. She is really his mother, though he knows it not, and she longs for the day when he will conscientiously and in gladness make his submission to her, and she bears him in mind, and on his marriage morning she lays down a third condition which shall be directly in his favor:

'The Catholic must promise to do all that is possible to win the non-Catholic party to the Catholic Faith, and there must be some reasonable hope of the non-Catholic party becoming Catholic.'