

Faith of Our Fathers

[A WEEKLY INSTRUCTION FOR YOUNG AND OLD.]

3.—Of God's Dominion of Property Over All Creatures.

Q. 16. What is the dominion of property?

A. It is the authority and right which one has to the possession and the use of anything that belongs to him; so that no other can deprive him of it without a crime; and he himself is at full liberty to use it as he pleases; to sell it—to give it away—to consume it—to destroy it, or any other way to dispose of it, without being accountable to anyone for his conduct. This kind of dominion belongs to every man with regard to those things which are entirely his own property.

Q. 17. Has God this dominion of property over all creatures?

A. He has, in the most unlimited manner: so that they and everything that belongs to them, are wholly and inalienably the property of God: He is their sole Lord and Master—He can do with them what He pleases—none can hinder Him—none can resist Him—nor can anyone find fault with Him for whatever He does—or say to Him. Why dost Thou so? He is absolute and independent in whatever way He chooses to treat them: He is accountable to none for His conduct towards them. This the royal prophet humbly acknowledges in these terms: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of Israel our Father, from eternity to eternity. Thine, O Lord, is magnificence and power, and glory and victory, and to Thee is praise: for all that is in heaven and in earth is Thine: Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art above all princes: Thine are riches, and Thine is glory: Thou hast dominion over all—in Thy hand is power and might—in Thy hand greatness, and the empire of all things" (1 Chr. xxix. 10). This dominion of God, the haughty Nabuchodonosor confessed in the most humble manner, in these words, after having experienced the effects of it to his cost: "And I praised and glorified Him Who liveth for ever and ever; for His power is everlasting power, and His kingdom is to all generations—all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing before Him; for He doth according to His will, as well with the powers of heaven, as among the inhabitants of the earth; and there is none that can resist His hand, or say to Him. Why hast Thou done it?" (Dan. iv. 32). This also was a source of comfort and confidence to the good Mordecai; for when he, and all the people of Israel, were upon the brink of destruction, from the malice of the wicked Haman, he had recourse to God for deliverance, and began his prayer in this manner—"O Lord God, Almighty King, for all things are in Thy power, and there is none that can resist Thy will, if Thou determine to save Israel. Thou hast made heaven and earth, and all things that are under the cope of heaven: Thou art Lord of all, and there is none that can resist Thy Majesty" (Esth. xiii. 9).

Q. 18. On what is this dominion of property, which Almighty God has over all creatures, founded?

A. On the same grounds with His dominion of jurisdiction, to wit, His being our Creator, our preserver, and our last end. And indeed (1) with regard to our creation and conservation, who does not see what an immense right this gives to God to do with us what ever He pleases?—what greater property can one have in anything, than in the work of his own hands? If a painter makes a picture—if a sculptor makes a statue—if an artist of any kind makes such a piece of work as is proper to his art, if they make these things of their own materials, and for themselves, have they not full power of them, to do with them what they please? If the painter should tear or burn his picture—if the sculptor should grind his statue to powder, or throw it into the sea, could any one find fault with them for doing so, or call them to an account for their conduct? The ready answer of each would be, *It is my own. I can do with it what I please.* Or could the picture itself, or the statue, if they had sense, complain of such treatment? If they did, the ready answer would be by him that made them—What injury have I done you? You had your being as a picture, or statue, from me; it was my own, and cannot I take my own again from you when I please? And what reply could be made to these answers? Now if this be unexceptionably the very nature of property, and

especially over the works of one's own hands, who can conceive the supreme power that God has over us from this consideration of His being our Creator? and still more from the continual and essential dependence we have on Him as our conservator? Though the painter lays on the colors on canvas, and makes the figure and form of the picture, yet he did not make the colors themselves, nor give the canvas its existence; though the sculptor cuts and carves the wood or stone, and forms it into the figure of a man, yet he did not create the substance of the wood, nor give being to the stone; but the great God not only gives us the figure and form we have, and whatever else we possess, but He gives us our very substance—our very existence—our being: He makes us what we are, not out of any matter independent on Him, but He creates the very matter itself of which we are composed, *out of nothing.* We have nothing but what is wholly His gift; and as we cannot subsist one instant without Him, so we, and all that we have, and all things else, still continue His absolute property, and wholly dependent upon Him. Consequently, in whatever way He is pleased to treat us, He can do us no injury. If He bestow any gift or benefit on us, it is the effect of His pure liberality, without any right or title on our part to receive it; and in giving it to us, He does not give up His property to it, but can, without the least shadow of injustice, take it from us when He wills. If He bestow His gifts more upon one than another who can find fault with Him? He does no injury to those that receive less. "Is it not lawful for Me," says He, "to do with My own what I will?" (Matt. xx., 15). "What do I owe you?—what did I ever receive from you?—Who hath given Me before that I should repay him? All things that are under heaven are Mine" (Job xli., 2). "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, said the Lord of Hosts" (Hag. ii., 9). "Behold the heaven is the Lord Thy God's, and the heaven of heavens, the earth, and all things that are therein" (Deut. x., 14). "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and He will give to whomsoever it shall please Him, and He will appoint the basest man over it" (Dan. iv., 14). In like manner, if He should reduce us to poverty—afflict us with pain—oppress us with sickness—overwhelm us with miseries—who shall dare to complain? or who has a right to oppose Him? "Cannot I do with you as the potter, O House of Israel? saith the Lord. Behold, as clay is in the hand of the potter, so are you in My hand, O House of Israel" (Jer. xviii., 6). "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed, say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? O hath not the potter power over the clay—of the same lump to make one vessel into honor, and another into dishonor?" (Rom. ix., 20). "The potter tempering soft clay, with labor fashioneth every vessel for our service, and of the same clay he maketh both vessels that are for clean use, and likewise such as serve to the contrary; but what is the use of these vessels the potter is the judge" (Wis. xv). And who shall then dare to find fault with the Almighty, whatever way He shall be pleased to treat us. "Woe to him that gainsayeth his Maker, a shred of the earthen pots: shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What art thou making? and thy work is without hands?" (Is. xlv., 9).

Papal Mission to Russia will Continue

For all the bitter persecution of Catholics by the Bolsheviks and their incitement of the Italian Communists to place the Pope on trial *in absentia*, it is understood that there is to be no relaxation of the efforts of the Papal Mission to the victims of the Russian famine (says *Catholic News Service*, London).

The Holy See is to continue its charitable work, and the Papal agents will go on as heretofore, while the subscription list for funds will remain open.

When two are willing with none else near,
When both are thrilling and know no fear,
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