

PROTESTANT CONTROVERSY.

BY A PROTESTANT MINISTER.

LXXIII.

We have thus far seen three stages of Luther's position towards the common people. We shall now see a fourth and a fifth.

First, when the peasants first rose, he reproved them for rising on the ground that no excess of tyranny can justify insurrection, but at the same time he mocked the lords, telling them that the hour of retribution was coming upon them for their unbounded oppressiveness in the past.

Second, when the revolt began to threaten the utter disintegration of society, Luther advised the princes to shoot down the peasants as if they were "mad dogs."

Third, as soon as the revolt was quelled, Luther begins again to scold the princes and lords for their past misgovernment, but now no longer for tyranny, but for harmful indulgence to the peasants. As his denunciations at the beginning of the revolt are absolutely irreconcilable, and as he knew the facts perfectly, being himself a peasant, being the companion and counsellor of nobles and magistrates, and being in the most intimate correspondence with every part of Germany, it follows that, for the sake of his own movement, he lied, either at the beginning of the rebellion or at the end. All authorities allow that the princes and nobles (which latter had largely the power of life and death over their vassals, were, in fact minor princes) had been excessively tyrannical. They could not, therefore, as a body, have been excessively indulgent. Luther's lies, therefore, appear at the end of the revolt, while he told the truth at the beginning. As his whole career shows, truth and lies alike were told, not in the interest of humanity, but of Lutheranism, and as he himself is on record as having said that no good Protestant would shrink from "a good plump lie," told for the sake of the true religion, his unscrupulousness is perfectly explained.

Fourth, with the suppression of the rebellion, Luther's whole concern for justice and humanity towards the common people seems to have permanently disappeared. After having bemoaned the wretched condition of the peasantry (which no one now disputes), he now turns upon them and nicks at them for not having known when they were well off. What if the prince did take away one of your two cows, says he, why were you not thankful that you were allowed to enjoy the other in peace? No, you took arms to maintain your right to both, and the consequence is that now you have neither. You have only suffered what you deserve. And, says he, now addressing the princes, you must deal with the peasants as men deal with asses. They load them down heavily, they are careful not to give them too much to eat, but what the beasts lack in fodder is amply made up to them in flagging.

So must you deal with Master Omnes. If you don't load down the common man with heavy burdens, you will soon lose all control of him. What is the sword put in your hand for but to use? Use it, therefore, with a will. Smite, slay, hang, burn, strike off heads, break men on the wheel. That is the way to keep them down. Master Omnes is a rude, unbridled creature, and it is your business to drive and coerce him, or any other beasts. Luther's dearly beloved and suffering brethren have suddenly been transmuted into brutes, except that they are to be handled with a hideousness of cruelty which no one thinks of using towards brutes.

Luther, however, did not stop with this counsel. In the following year, 1527, he openly advocates the reintroduction of slavery. Like certain Southern economists before 1861, he proposes to settle the question between capital and labor by having capital own labor. Then, says he, we shouldn't be having this perpetual trouble about domestic service. As things are you can't get anything done thoroughly in the house or field, without perpetual wrangles, either over the work or the wages. And if the men marry, their wives are more absolutely unmanageable than themselves. Now if all these people were only made slaves, no one of them would dare to peep, for he would be looking for his master's fist to come down upon his skull, and so the dispute should be settled in short order.

Where Luther was not led by a political interest, he had extraordinary powers of Scriptural interpretation. Any one, Protestant or Catholic, may profit by his commentaries, after discarding the bigoted delusions in them. When he has an object, however, no man can be more consummately regardless of Scripture, either in letter or in spirit. He "tosses the Book of Esther into the Elbe" as unceremoniously as he consulled the Eiektor to toss the idiot child, whom he pronounced to be "a mere lump of flesh."

He reproves Saint John for his anathemas against the man who should add to the Apocalypse or take from it. He regards the epistle of James as "an epistle of straw" compared with St. Paul, because he maintains that James contradicts Paul as to justification.

Whether he does or not, it is certain that both contradict Luther, so that his arbitration here appears rather unprofitable to himself. However, I believe that he finally thought himself to have been too hasty here, and graciously received James back into full canonical standing. We have seen how scornfully outrageous he was when

taken to task for his falsification of Paul.

Now if Luther had been interested in opposing slavery, instead of commending it, he never would have suffered himself to be put down by an anachronistic appeal to the Old Testament. He would have reminded his opponents that our Lord pronounces the least in the kingdom of heaven to be greater than the greatest of the prophets. He would have remarked that, in comparison with New Testament fulness of grace, even the divinely instituted Old Testament ordinances are pronounced by St. Paul to have been but "weak and beggarly rudiment."

What then, he would have said, since the Son of God has come and has established the brotherhood of all men in His Church, can excuse our reverting to the heathen division of men into owners and chatties, which the Church, led by her Popes and bishops, has at last well outgrown? Abraham was great and good, but what is he, compared with his divine Son, whose day he rejoiced to see in vision, but never lived to see on earth? And are we to take Gentile kings as instructors in Christian morals?

This is how Luther would have reasoned had he wished to keep in line with the advancing mind of Christendom. He would not have allowed that either slavery or polygamy could lawfully be revived where it had once been abolished. Now, however, that he has an object in commending slavery, he suddenly discovers that to oppose it is to be disrespectful to Abraham and to Abraham's worthy pagan friend King Abimelech, not to speak of Isaac and Jacob.

We can not suppose that this pitiful pretence of Scripture argument really imposed on Luther. He would have liked to have slavery revived, and as he did not find much comfort for his project in Christ and His apostles, he fell back upon the twilight times and twilight examples of the patriarchs, and was even willing to have recourse to a King of the Philistines. He owns, to be sure, that he does not expect to be listened to, and even the Lutheran princes did not venture to follow him so far, as only one Lutheran prince ventured to take advantage of his sanction of polygamy. Yet he owns that he yearns for the good time to return when a vender could say: "This boy is to be had for a guinea, and this strong fellow for eight; this little girl for one, and this capable maid of all work for six." "If the world only stands long enough," he concludes, "we shall have to come back to that yet." I hope none of us are such enthusiastic Protestants as to be sorry that in this respect the Reformer of Wittenburg has turned out a false prophet.

Charles C. Starbuck.
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NON CATHOLIC MISSIONS.

What the Paulist Fathers are Doing in New York.

During the last week in January one of the most gratifying missions for non Catholics was given in the Paulist church, New York city. The vast building was filled and for the most part with strangers in search of the truth, or attracted to the services by curiosity. In a metropolitan mission of this sort the charm which the Catholic religion possesses for the merely inquisitive is frequently the indirect means of arousing an intelligent interest, and ultimately a conviction of the truth. The cruel realism of city life, instead of destroying the attractiveness of what is mysterious and unknown, whets the appetite, and a half-daring inclination to investigate a system about which maligners have told so many gruesome stories is born of the urban thirst for excitement and untold sensations. Those attending the exercises from this motive are usually led on to receive the explanations advanced from the pulpit, and the surprise and approval they avoke pave the way for earnest desire to learn more. The New York and Brooklyn papers freely announced the mission just closed and these notices, together with the large sign above the church's open doors, are responsible for many a serious view of life's meaning and responsibility now awakened after having long since fallen into the disturbed sleep of Protestant orthodoxy. Upon the city itself, more noticeably than elsewhere, Protestantism has lost its grip. According to Helen Clark only 7 per cent of the population of Greater New York is affiliated to the Protestant churches, and the falling off is steadily continuing, despite the moving and uniting of their congregations. The class for inquirers, begun at the close of the week's exercises, is attended by one hundred and fifty persons, and at its first assembling, upon a demand for those thoroughly convinced, twenty announced themselves anxious for immediate reception into the Church.

One of the prominent features of the Paulists' mission was the large attendance of people from Brooklyn whom the long, late journey of an hour or more could not deter from embracing this opportunity for instruction. No doubt the recent missions given in all the churches there contributed to this result. This belief is confirmed by the fact that in the one church which deferred a week to non Catholics, after its regular mission for Catholics, fifty-nine converts were received and thirty persons are now under instruction for baptism. The work of the mission is continued in the inquiry class, and all converts and candidates for admission are pledged to a regular attendance for one month at least. This insures the permanence of the week's results and a thorough grounding in the de-

votional life of the Church, so often meaningless to the ill instructed, even among Catholics bred in the faith.

The incidents of a non Catholic mission are often as consoling and edifying as any apostle's heart could desire. In this connection, one of the mission Fathers mentions the case of an old man of sixty, his white head bowed with humility, contrite joy of conversion rather than with the burden of his years, who approached the baptismal font after one the mission for non-Catholics. His son, a fine, stalwart man of thirty five, witnessed the ceremony with tears in his eyes, and at its close, grasping the priest's hand with deep emotion, exclaimed: "Thank God, Father! This is the fruit of the prayers of a life-time!" Surely, by affording the opportunity for even one such blessing the labors of a week are well worthy of the missionary's humble gratitude to God, and the facts are bound to reawaken in our hearts the often dormant enthusiasm of the missionary spirit.

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Quinquagesima Sunday.

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.

"Lord that I may see." (Luke 18, 37.)

These are innumerable persons, my dear brethren, who can justly be compared with the blind man of today's gospel. They are in possession of good corporal eyesight, but their souls have no eyes to see and to understand what is beneficial for them.

They are these spiritually blind? They are all those unfortunate sinners who, having separated themselves from God, walk in the darkness of their impotence, on the broad road to perdition. In the Old Testament, the prophet Sophonias speaks of these impetuous, saying: "They shall walk as blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord." (Soph. 1, 17) Truly, brethren, it is a blindness without parallel when a worm of the earth dares to continue in enmity with the Creator, who at any moment can command the angel of death to strike with the scythe and behold, the daring sinner will lie buried in hell! Is it not a blindness apt to move us to tears, if we are daily performing good works which would insure the great heavenly reward, and yet we must say to ourselves: "It is all in vain, we are separated from God, and hence no rewards awaits us hereafter. It is not a blindness indescribably sad when God daily offers His mercy, pardon and reconciliation, and you deliberately close your eyes to every ray of heavenly grace, and stubbornly refuse to take the saving hand of God which is held out to you? Ah! must we not fear that the command of God through the prophet Isaias be accomplished in you. "Blind the heart of this people, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them." (Isaias 6, 10)

The philosopher Seneca relates of a servant girl who suddenly lost her eyesight from the effect of a flash of lightning. The poor girl would not believe that she was blind, but she had agreed that it had suddenly grown dark: as the darkness did not disappear, she always kept a lamp burning and continued to do her work. One day, however, she unfortunately fell down a stairway and broke her neck. There are, my dear brethren, many Christians in a similar condition. All though their souls are totally blind, they will not believe it. On the contrary, they consider themselves as the only ones who are wise and can see, hence they look down with smiling contempt on those who indulge in serious thoughts of penance, rather than drink the cup of pleasure which the world offers to its votaries. Shouting in wild revelry, they dance along in mirthful company the broad and flower strewn road, against which our Lord warned us, until the dread hand of death grasps them and hurls them into the eternal fire of hell. This misfortune, having happened, it can never be repaired. Now their tears flow like rivers of fire, but never will they be able to purify the soul and cleanse it from the sins for which they must suffer eternally.

The Roman Emperor Adrian had a servant who from his youth had lost the sight of one eye. When the poor young man accidentally lost the other eye, the emperor, moved with compassion, promised to grant any petition that he asked. The blind youth remained silent, but being impudored by the emperor, he at last said, My lord restore my eyesight. My dear Christians, this petition was his vain, for God alone can restore the sight that has been totally destroyed. But you, spiritually blind, will it also be vain for you to cry out, Oh! that I may see! Oh! no, if you really and earnestly desire to have your spiritual sight restored, I shall direct you to a physician who will most willingly help you. It is the same who, as is related in the gospel of to-day, restored the sight of the blind man who in Jerusalem spoke to the man born blind: "Go wash in the pool of Siloes." "Go and wash," says the Lord, "and thou shalt see." (John 9, 7.) To you also, my dear Christians, our Lord directs this admonition: "Go and wash." But where? In the life-giving waters of the sacrament of penance. Yes, go confess your sins, be sorry for them, atone for them by penance, and as true as God reigns in Heaven, the priestly absolution will cure you of the blindness with which the devil and sin have afflicted you. If, however, your sight has been restored, beware of again becoming

blind. Do not look back with a longing desire to the world and its illusive pleasures, but steadfastly keep your eyes on Jesus, your Divine Model, on Mary your blessed mother, on Heaven your eternal home. Then certainly you will retain the glorious sight of your soul during your whole life, and for this be recompensed by seeing the true God in Heaven above, face to face, amidst glory of His saints, in an ocean of bliss and eternal happiness. Amen.

IMITATION OF CHRIST.

Confidence in God.

Although a diffidence of ourselves be absolutely necessary, we must also join a firm confidence in God, the author of all good, and from whom alone the victory must be expected. For if it be certain that of ourselves we are nothing, dangerous and continual misfortunes will attend us; and reason will suggest a diffidence of our own strength; but if we are fully convinced of our weakness, we shall gain, through the assistance of God, very signal advantages over our enemies, nothing being of greater efficacy for obtaining the assistance of heaven, than placing a noble confidence in God. We have four means of acquiring this excellent virtue.

The first is to ask it with great humility.

The second is, to contemplate with a lively faith, the immense power and infinite wisdom of that Supreme Being, to whom nothing is difficult, whose goodness knows no limits, whose love for those who serve Him is ever ready to furnish them with whatever is requisite for their spiritual life, and gaining a complete victory over themselves. All that He demands of them is to have recourse to Him with an entire confidence.

The third means of acquiring this salutary confidence is frequently to call to mind what we are assured of in the holy scriptures, those oracles of truth, in a thousand different places, that no one who puts his trust in God, shall be confounded.

The fourth means of acquiring both a diffidence of ourselves and confidence in God, is that when we have any good action to perform, or some failing to encounter, before we enter upon it, we cast our eyes upon our own weakness on one side, and on the other contemplate the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God, and that balancing what we fear from ourselves, with what we hope from God, we courageously undergo the greatest difficulties and severest trial. With these arms joined to prayer, as we shall see hereafter, we shall be enabled to execute the greatest designs, and gain complete victories.

SELF-JUDGMENT.

One always feels like asking himself at the close of the year, "Just what has this twelvemonth meant for me?" It is easy enough to reckon up gains and losses, joys and sorrows, and it is not difficult to reach a conclusion as to one's development in the best elements of character, and that, after all, is the main thing, and with reference to it all material things whatever are only like the marbles with which we learned to count. The main difficulty comes from gaining a correct perspective of ourselves with reference to the true and worthy standard. The capacities of self-delusion are almost infinite, and we are constantly tempted to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to be; but it is also well to remember that probably no one deals with men quite so sparingly as an honest mind deals with itself.

One of the hardest things in the world is to be just to ourself. It is not easy to forgive yourself, even after you have reason to believe that God has forgiven you. So on either side there is this element of untrustworthiness in our self-judgment. Perhaps the wisest course is not to depend too much on the moral balance sheet, but to go on and take up our duties in a cheerful and unselfish spirit. If our feet are in the right path, and our faces set toward the right, we probably will not be disappointed in the outcome of the year.—The Watchman.

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5. Devoting one's self to the education of Indian children by accepting the charge of any school on Indian Reserves—a small salary attached.
6. Entering a Religious Order of men or women specially devoted to work among the Indians. (For North-Western Canada) the Oblate Fathers, the Grey Nuns of Montreal and the Franciscan Nuns (Quebec), etc.
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OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

A Boy Who Recommended Himself.
John Brent was trimming his hedge and the "snip, snip," of his shears was a pleasing sound to his ears. In the rear of him stretched a wide, smooth, kept lawn, in the center of which stood his residence, a handsome, massive modern structure, which had cost him not less than \$80,000.00.

The owner of it was the man who, in shabby attire, was trimming his hedge. "A close, stingy old skinflint, I'll warrant," some boy is ready to say.

No, he wasn't. He trimmed his own hedge for recreation, as he was a man of sedentary habits. His shabby clothes were his working clothes, while those he wore on other occasions were both neat and expensive; indeed, he was very particular even about what are known as the minor appointments of dress.

Instead of being stingy he was exceedingly liberal. He was always contributing to benevolent enterprises, and helping deserving people, often when they had not asked his help.

Just beyond the hedge was the public sidewalk, and two boys stopped opposite to where he was at work, he on one side of the hedge, and they on the other.

"Halloo, Fred! That's a very handsome racket, one of them that you paid about \$7,000 for, didn't you?"

"Only \$6,000, Charlie," was the reply. "Your old one is in prime order yet. What will you take for it?"

"I sold it to Willie Robbins for \$1,500," replied Fred.

"Well, now, that was silly," declared Charlie. "I'd have given you \$3,000 for it."

"You are too late," replied Fred. "I have promised it to Willie."

"Oh! you only promised it to him, eh! And he simply promised to pay for it I suppose? I'll give you \$5,000 cash for it."

"I can't do it, Charlie," was the reply. "You can if you want to. A \$1,500 more is not to be sneezed at."

"Of course not," admitted Fred, "and I'd like to have it, only I promised the racket to Willie."

"But you are not bound to keep your promise. You are at liberty to take more for it. Tell him that I offered you another time as much, and that will settle it."

"No, Charlie," gravely replied the other boy, "that will not settle it—neither with Willie nor with me. I cannot disappoint him. A bargain is a bargain. The racket is his, even if it hasn't been delivered."

"Oh, let him have it," retorted Charlie, angrily. "Fred Fenton, I will not say you are a chump, but I'll predict that you'll never make a successful business man. You are too punctilious."

John Brent overheard the conversation, and he stepped to a gap in the hedge, in order to get a look at the boy who had such a high regard for his word.

"The lad has a good face, and is made of the right sort of stuff," was the millionaire's mental comment. "He places proper value upon his integrity, and he will succeed in business because he is punctilious."

The next day, while he was again working on his hedge, John Brent overheard another conversation. Fred Fenton was again a participant in it.

"Fred, let us go over to the circus to," the other boy said. "The men are putting up the tents for the afternoon performance."

"No, Joe; I'd rather not," Fred said.

"But why?"

"On account of the profanity. One never hears anything good on such occasions, and I would advise you not to go. My mother would not want me to go."

"I'd she say you shouldn't?"

"No, Joe."

"Then let us go. You'll not be disobeying her orders."

"But I'll be disobeying her wishes," insisted Fred. "No, I'll not go."

"That is another good point in the boy," thought John Brent. "A boy who respects his mother's wishes very rarely goes wrong."

Two months later, John Brent advertised for a clerk in his factory, and there were at least a dozen applicants. "I can simply take your names and make inquiries about you, and notify one of you whom I conclude to select. Three of the boys gave their names and residences."

"What is your name?" he asked as he glanced at the fourth boy.

"Fred Fenton, sir," was the reply. John Brent remembered the name and the boy. He looked at him keenly, a pleased smile crossing his face.

"You can stay," he said. "I've been suited sooner than I expected," he added, looking at the other boys, and dismissing them with a wave of his hand.

"Why did you take me?" asked Fred, in surprise. "Why were inquiries not necessary in my case? You do not know me."

"I know you better than you think I do," John Brent said, with a significant smile.

"But I offered you no recommendation," suggested Fred.

"My boy, it wasn't necessary," replied John Brent. "I overheard you recommend yourself."

But as he felt disposed to enlighten Fred, he told him about the two conversations he had overheard.

Now, boys, this is a true story. There is a moral in it. You are more frequently observed and heard overheard than you are aware