

Northwest Review.



"AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM."

THE ONLY CATHOLIC PAPER PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH IN NORTH-WESTERN CANADA.

VOL. XIV, No. 46.

ST. BONIFACE, MANITOBA, TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 1899.

\$2.00 per year.
Single Copies, 5 cents.

FATHER DRUMMOND, S.J.,

Replies to ARCHDEACON FORTIN.

(Continued from last week.)

In translating this passage I have had to use some technical terms in common use among Catholic theologians when they speak English. The word "grave" in particular here implies a mortal sin; for instance, "a grave obligation" means an obligation under pain of mortal sin, and "grave matter" means a quantity of stolen goods sufficient to constitute a mortal sin of theft.

Any careful reader who confronts these two passages will immediately notice the difference between the first quotation Archdeacon Fortin introduced into his sermon and the second which he now gives. The former states incorrectly (and is therefore a garbled quotation), the difference between mortal and venial thefts, and the last words "whilst he may retain the former ones," are certainly not from Liguori or any other Catholic theologian. The latter insists on the necessity of restitution even though the thief was not aware that he was committing a mortal sin. This new quotation also is badly garbled since the principal verb and a very important adverbial initial clause are omitted. Fancy any honest controversialist beginning a quotation at the sixteenth word of a sentence directly after a comma, and then placing a period just where the sense is about to be modified by another limiting clause! This is what the Archdeacon does when he writes: "Nevertheless, in small thefts, when anyone attains to a matter of importance, he is bound under grave penalty to make restitution. In the last theft which completes the matter of importance, it is allowable to recognize a mortal sin, etc." This is

SHEER NONSENSE,

resulting from a misunderstanding of the Latin word "licet." The Archdeacon has forgotten that "licet," when introducing a subordinate concessive proposition, without abandoning the main proposition, is used as a conjunction, meaning "even if, though"; he translates it as if it were an impersonal verb, and so he blunders into "it is allowable," which thus becomes the principal verb of a new and independent sentence and completely travesties Liguori's meaning. Liguori never dreamt of writing that "it is allowable not to recognize a mortal sin"; what he did say was, "even if.....he has not perceived the mortal sin." Thus the Archdeacon has, by his mistranslation, reduced a very clear sentence to unintel-

ligible rubbish; and, quite unconscious of the sorry figure he is cutting in the eyes of Latin scholars, he asks, "What becomes of Father Drummond's sneer?" and "Is that fit teaching for the people of this young country?"

To be sure, it is not fit teaching even for an old country; but then, Mr. Editor, it is not the teaching of Liguori. And here I wish distinctly to state, in the very teeth of Archdeacon Fortin's patronizing and gratuitous supposition, that I am not "getting out of conceit with the strange and grotesque morals of my 'church.'" They are strange and grotesque only to men of evil thoughts and large ignorance. And albeit the physical atmosphere of Manitoba is undoubtedly pure, I have yet to discover that the moral air of the majority of its inhabitants is particularly "pure and honest." There are, doubtless, many excellent persons in this province, and I feel sure that most of the readers of this letter will fall into that category, but I must say—since the Archdeacon so shamelessly misrepresents my true feelings—that I have never heard of any Catholic country, the Philippines and Mexico not excepted, where so large a proportion of the population is engaged in commercial and political knavery and in daily efforts to shirk the payment of honest debts.

Far from repudiating St. Alphonsus Liguori, I deem him a marvel of ethical wisdom, of the heroism of whose character his maligners have not a dream. Most of his moral judgments I hold to be eminently wise, and in particular I heartily approve of the passage of which the Archdeacon has given us the mutilated original and the absurd translation. My approval, of course, bears only on the true text.

As I have, in my sermon on auricular confession (see Tribune, Jan. 16, 1899), explained the reasonableness of the necessary distinction between mortal and venial sin, I will merely remind the reader that the Catholic Church holds venial sin to be, after mortal sin, the greatest of all evils, worse than the death of the body. Consequently, when Catholic theologians speak of "small matter" in connection with venial sin, they do not mean that it is a mere trifle, they use the word "small" in contradistinction to the word "grave," somewhat as we might say that Mont Blanc, imposing as it is, is really small if compared to the Himalayas.

DEFENCE OF LIGUORI.

This being premised, I proceed to defend Liguori's opinion. It will be noted, in my translation of the passage, that I have inserted, from the original the references to other authors omitted by the Archdeacon. These references show that Liguori's opin-

ion, though the common one among Catholic theologians, is nevertheless, only an opinion, contradicted, as he himself says, by other theologians. One might hold a contrary opinion and yet be a good Catholic. But I believe Liguori's view to be the true one. Since there is a distinction between mortal and venial sins, the line that parts them must be clear and definite. Now, suppose a sinner steals small sums at different times which in the aggregate have crossed, without his perceiving the fact, the dividing line between mortal and venial sin, as soon as he becomes aware of that fact, he is bound under pain of mortal sin to restore at least that portion of the aggregate sum which would reduce that aggregate to a venial matter. The grave obligation ceases as soon as, owing to a partial restitution, the matter ceases to be grave. For example, if \$2.50 are required for a mortal theft, the restitution of 50 cents brings back the theft to the category of venial matter. Therefore the sinner is no longer obliged to restore the two dollars under pain of mortal sin; but he is always obliged to do so under pain of venial sin. This reasoning, granting the Catholic premises, will, I am sure, approve itself to every lawyer-like mind, though I am quite resigned to hear it ridiculed by the superficial apostles of humbug and hypocrisy.

SLANDEROUS FABRICATIONS.

And this brings me, by an easy transition, to the legitimate defence of my own words against the dishonest travesty of them which the Archdeacon palms off on your readers who cannot all be supposed to have kept a copy of my sermon on auricular confession. The Archdeacon says I have "discovered that a wife may steal from her husband and children from their parents without any great harm." I said nothing about the harm of stealing. What I spoke of was the necessity of restitution after theft by wives and children. My words were these: "Husbands and fathers are not supposed to be so incensed at appropriations by their wives and children as to expect them to restore what they have thus appropriated. Of course it would be better that children and wives should so restore and they are always exhorted thereunto, but what Liguori means is that the obligation in these cases is not so stringent" as in thefts by persons not of the family.

The Archdeacon continues, speaking of me: "He has also discovered that.....the guilt of theft depends on the circumstances of the man who is robbed. If he is rich you need have no scruples; put your hand deep in his pocket; if he is only fairly off, you must moderate your greed; and if he is poor, then you must rob him very sparingly. O tempora, O mores!" This, Mr. Editor, is I submit, a shameful travesty of my words, which were: "To steal a valuable thing is certainly a mortal sin. To steal a small amount from a very poor man might also be a mortal sin, though if stolen from a rich man it would be a venial sin, because the harm done to him would not be great." It is perfectly reasonable that the greater or less guilt of a theft should depend on the circumstances of the man who is robbed. If A. has but a loaf of bread between him and starvation, B. certainly commits

a mortal sin if, being himself in no danger of starvation, he steals it from him. But to steal that same loaf from a rich man's pantry would not be a mortal sin, though it would be a venial sin. On the other hand, immensely wealthy though the injured person may be, there is always a definite quantity which would constitute a mortal sin of theft. To steal \$5 from Lord Strathcona would be a mortal sin. And it must be borne in mind that every deliberate theft, however small, is condemned by all theologians as a very real wrong called a venial sin. Hence the Archdeacon's "You need have no scruples; put your hand deep in his pocket . . . You must moderate . . . You must rob sparingly" is a maliciously slanderous perversion of our teaching.

MORE GARBLING.

Archdeacon Fortin really seems constitutionally incapable of quoting anyone correctly. In his sermon he had said that in the confessional "questions are often asked of young people which are a perfect revelation to them, and open up a vista or corruption . . . hitherto unknown to them." I replied: "It is a fundamental principle, taught in all our books of moral theology, that in matters of purity no question should ever be asked that teaches the penitent anything as yet unknown." You will note, Mr. Editor, that in this reply I did not assert that no priest ever asked immoral questions; I was, on the contrary, fully aware that certain bad priests, who without any change of heart, became good Protestants, had been suspended from the Catholic ministry for asking immoral questions. The Archdeacon, in his letter to you, sir, now writes: "He (Father Drummond) further says that the priest never asks immoral questions of boys and girls in the confessional." I never said this. What I did say was that they ought not to ask—not immoral questions, for those no one should ask—but imprudent questions on delicate matters.

PRUDENT QUESTIONING.

Then the Archdeacon, with a thinly veiled prudency, which he ought to suppress when he preaches or writes to the papers, quotes a Latin passage in which Liguori shows how young people may be delicately questioned in such a way as to lead them to confess any immorality of which they may have been guilty. The Archdeacon stops suddenly in horror at the "immorality of the confessional," but he is careful not to tell his readers why he breaks off thus dramatically. I will tell them. He stops at a comma, because the next clause, "sed caveat ab exquirendo," etc., utters a note of warning against imprudent questions. In that conclusion of the sentence which the Archdeacon, with his usual honesty, omits, Liguori writes: "In the case of such persons it is better to sacrifice the completeness of the confession than to be the occasion of their learning, or being inspired with the curiosity to learn, what they do not yet know." Had the Archdeacon finished the quotation, he would have ruined his own case; so he prudently suppressed it. But he overlooked one clause in the Latin that he did quote, probably because he did not understand it, there being two misprints in ten words. This is the clause: "Sed in hac materia confessarius sit valde cautus in

interrogando;" "But in these matters let the confessor, be very cautious how he questions."

Now Mr. Editor, I maintain that this passage, completed as I have completed it, is perfectly wise and prudent. Many children have been rescued from the danger of contracting lifelong habits of vice by just such prudent questioning. No doubt it is much pleasanter for parents and pastors to close their eyes on such things and, according to Kipling's heathen morality, let the fittest survive; but those who really value chastity and integrity of body and soul will leave no stone unturned to save the young from moral contagion.

To revert to a parallel which I developed at some length in my sermon on auricular confession, and which the Archdeacon evidently finds unanswerable since he eschews it,

CONSCIENTIOUS PHYSICIANS

have frequently to interrogate their patients on matters of this kind. The only difference is that they do it more bluntly, less delicately than it is done in the confessional. The same parallel applies to all similar passages in Liguori. Many chapters in medical text-books, which are quite proper in that place, would cause the seizure of an ordinary newspaper if they were printed therein. Archdeacon Fortin says: "I could quote passages from that author (Liguori) which would cause every Roman Catholic in Winnipeg to blush for his church." No; they would not cause any intelligent Catholic to blush for his church, but the publication in English of technical information printed originally in Latin for the use of theologians alone would certainly make both Protestants and Catholics blush for the prurient prude who chuckles at the mere thought of translating such (to him) savory morsels.

SUPPRESSIO VERI.

The suppression of the truth is one kind of misrepresentation in which I have shown the Archdeacon to be proficient. Here is another and last example. I had, in my sermon, quoted the following passage from Canon Scannell, of Southampton, England: "There is no kind of crime treated of in our moral theology but such as is minutely described in the authorized version of the Bible. There is this difference, however, that in Catholic theology such wickedness is specified in chastely-guarded Latin, whereas in the authorized version it is set forth in what to over-sensitive minds appears as too plainly explicit English. * * But the Bible and theology are protected by the same spirit that pervades both. None but the perversely reprobate could derive harm from the language of either. Vice in both is depicted in a manner which makes it not attractive, but loathsome." The Archdeacon omits the last three sentences, which give the gist of the whole passage. That there unfortunately are "perversely reprobate" readers of the Bible is proved by the well known fact, adverted to by the late Father Chiniquy, before he left the Catholic Church, that, in the case of Bibles exposed in public places, you can often tell what morally dangerous passages to skip by observing what pages have been most assiduously thumbed. In con-

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