

PLAIN REASONS AGAINST JOINING THE
CHURCH OF ROME.

MARRIAGE DISPENSATIONS.

LII. There is another scandal, akin to that of the old Indulgences, still prevalent in the Roman Church, namely, that of dispensations for marriages within the prohibited degrees, which are very much more numerous than in the Church of England, including not only first, second, and third cousins, but also "spiritual affinities" created by sponsorship at baptisms. Nevertheless, dispensations are to be had for marriage with a brother's widow, with a wife's sister, or between an uncle and niece; though in Leviticus xviii. 12-14, the marriage of a nephew and aunt is declared incestuous, and there is no difference in principle between the two cases. (Andre, "Droit Canon," s. v. "Empêchements.") Practically, some of these dispensations mean simply the payment of certain fees by persons rich and influential enough to get the matter expedited for them. Now here is a very grave scandal. Either marriages of these kinds are permissible by God's law, or they are not. That is a fairly arguable matter. But if they be permissible and expedient, the Roman Church has no right to set up toll-bars and block the way against those who desire to contract them, unless they undertake an expensive process meant to bring gain into the coffers of the Datary. Contrariwise, if such unions be forbidden or inexpedient, then to relax a moral and religious prohibition is an indefensible abuse, a playing fast-and-loose with holy things which cannot be too severely condemned. And, accordingly, Scipio de' Ricci, Bishop of Pistoia and Prato, denounced the whole system in 1780 as *una infame bottega*, "a shameful traffic."

* Even this union is sometimes permitted, and there is a case of a marriage of a nephew and aunt in the Portuguese Royal family in 1777.

† The practical use of keeping up this system in the modern Roman Church is this: Bishops in their dioceses are the ordinary ministers through whom such dispensations as are gratis are issued. Their faculties for doing this last only five years, and have to be periodically renewed. By depriving any bishop of this power, all the laity of his diocese are roused against him, because they are prevented from contracting marriages, and all the clergy too, because they lose the bridal fees, and accordingly his submission to Rome in any emergency can be secured by a turn of this screw, as Bishop Hefele of Rottenburg learnt not long ago to his cost.

ROMAN UNTRUSTWORTHINESS.

LIII. The next valid reason (and especially for the unlearned) against joining the modern Church of Rome, is the entire disregard for truth exhibited in its polemics, in its claims, its cults, relics, legends, and even its very office-books. This is, in fact, that peculiarity of its practical system which brings it most definitely into collision with the Word of God. Not only can the Christian religion have no claim whatever on our acceptance unless it be true, but the moral tone of the Bible is throughout one, indivisible, and clear, on the hatefulness of all falsehood in God's sight. The law given on Sinai, "Thou shalt not bear false witness," is echoed again and again through the sacred writings down to the last book in the canon. So Job rebukes his friends: "Will ye speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for Him?" (Job xiii. 7). So the Wise Man speaks: "The Lord doth hate . . . a false witness that speaketh lies" (Prov. vi. 16-19); and again, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xii. 21). So the Lord Himself spake by His prophet: "And of these shall be taken up a curse . . . because they have spoken lying words in My Name, which I have not commanded them" (Jer. xxix. 22, 23). So the Apostle counsels his flock, "Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour" (Eph. iv. 25); so the beloved disciple in the Apocalypse warns us that "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. xxi. 8); and that "whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" is

left outside the gates of the heavenly city, along with sorcerers, murderers, idolaters, and the like. (Rev. xxii. 15.)

Nevertheless, the Roman Church which "professes to worship Him Who has said, I am the Truth," is honey-combed through and through with accumulated falsehood; and things have come to this pass, that no statement whatever, however precise and circumstantial; no reference to authorities, however seemingly frank and clear, to be found in a Roman controversial book, or to be heard from the lips of a living controversialist, can be taken on trust; nor accepted, indeed, without rigorous search and verification. The thing may be true, but there is not so much as a presumption in favour of its proving so when tested. The degree of guilt varies, no doubt, from deliberate and conscious falsehood with fraudulent intent, down through reckless disregard as to whether the thing be true or false, to mere overpowering bias causing misrepresentation; but truth, pure and simple, is almost never to be found, and the whole truth, in no case whatever.

PROOFS OF THE CHARGE.

LIV. And now to offer a few proofs in support of so heavy an accusation. The process began early:—

a. In A.D. 419, a Council of the whole African Church was held at Carthage, and Faustinus, Bishop of Potenza, who was legate of the Pope there, tendered in proof of the Pope's right to hear appeals from foreign Churches certain canons of the local Synod of Sardica, held in 317, and not received either in Eastern or Southern Christendom, as if they were canons of the General Council of Nicea in 325, and universally binding. The Council had a search made in the archives of Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople, of course vainly, save that authentic copies of the Nicene Canons were sent to it; whereupon it rejected the Sardican Canons, had the Nicene Canons read and affirmed, and wrote to the Pope, complaining of the attempted fraud, and told him that nothing should make them tolerate such insolent conduct on his part. This letter was signed, amongst others, by the illustrious St. Augustine. Nevertheless, the same use was made of them by Pope Leo the Great only thirty years later, when the record of the matter was still fresh; and yet a third time by Felix III., to coerce Acacius of Constantinople.

b. The Roman legates at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, produced a forged copy of the Nicene Canons, containing, in the Sixth Canon, the words, "The Roman See has always had the Primacy," which were promptly repudiated by the Council.

c. It is matter of history, recorded by St. Jerome, that the Emperor Constantine the Great was baptized on his death-bed in Nicomedia, an Asiatic city, by Eusebius, its bishop. Nevertheless, a fable was invented in the fifth century that this emperor was a leper, and was healed of his disease at Rome by means of baptism administered to him there by Pope Sylvester, in gratitude for which he made over to the Popes all right of sovereignty over Rome itself, and much adjacent territory (the famous so called Donation of Constantine); and this falsehood, invented for a political purpose, which it effectually served, holds its place still in the Roman Breviary, and is read by every priest on December 31st each year.

d. In the year 754 Pope Stephen III. forged a letter in the name of the Apostle St. Peter, and sent it to Pippin, King of France, calling on him to come to the defence of the Pope and the city of Rome against the Lombards; which he accordingly did, and bestowed on the Pontiff a great territory, containing more than twenty cities, the first beginning of the temporal power. Fleury, in recording this event, describes it as "an artifice without parallel before or since in Church history." ("Hist. Eccl." ix. 354.) That is how the Pope first became a king, and a very creditable story it is.

e. In the middle of the ninth century came the greatest of all the forgeries, the famous "False Decretals," that is, a collection of about a hundred

formal official letters and decrees of a number of early Popes and Councils, on points of doctrine and discipline, all intended to augment the Papal authority; which were fabricated in Western Gaul about 815, and were eagerly seized on by Pope Nicolas I., an ambitious and perfectly unscrupulous pontiff (858-867), to aid in revolutionizing the Church, as he, in fact, largely succeeded in doing. Here are a few specimens of the sort of thing with which they teem.

"Not even amongst the Apostles was there equality, but one was set over all."

"The Head of the Church is the Roman Church."

"The Church of Rome, by a unique privilege, has the right of opening and shutting the gates of Heaven for whom she will."

It is usually alleged by Roman controversialists that the Popes had nothing to do with inventing these forgeries, and that the worst with which they are chargeable was having, like everybody else, accepted them as genuine in an uncritical age, especially as they did but codify and register what was actually believed much earlier. These pleas are untenable; for the very simple reason that the Popes have always had what no one else had, full means of ascertaining the facts by referring to the Roman archives. But Pope Nicolas I. solemnly and publicly lied on this head to some of the Frankish bishops, assuring them that the Roman Church had long preserved all these documents with honour in her archives, and that every writing of a Pope is binding on the whole Church, knowing, as he did, that not one of the forgeries was or ever had been laid up in those archives. (Mansi, "Concil." xv. 695.) Not only so, but though the forgeries have been now known as such for more than three centuries, and are admitted by Cardinals Baronius ("Ann." A.D. 865, sect. 8) and Bellarmine ("De Pontif. Rom." ii. 11), the two greatest of Ultramontain writers, nay, by Pope Pius VI. himself, who in 1789 said they ought to be burned ("Letter to Four German Metropolitans," quoted by F. Gratry); yet they are still wrought into the whole texture of the Roman canon law, which is very largely made up of them; they are quoted as genuine in Liguori's "Moral Theology," i. 114, the chief text-book on its subject in the Roman Church, to prove Papal infallibility; and they have been inserted as genuine several times in the Breviary itself at the last revision, by those two very cardinals just named, who knew the truth; as on January 16, where Pope Marcellus I. is represented as having written to the Bishop of the province of Antioch to the effect that Rome in the Head of Church, and that no council can lawfully be held without leave of the Roman Pontiff.

f. Baronius has also falsified the Roman Martyrology, by inventing statements that various early bishops, whose mere names stand in the old editions, were consecrated and given missions to different Churches by St. Peter from Rome, so as to make Rome appear the Mother Church of these places. And he has altered the date of St. Denis of Paris by two hundred years with this same view.

CHURCH PRINCIPLES.

THE IMPERATIVE DUTY OF THE CLERGY TO
INSTRUCT THEIR FLOCKS.

From the Bishop of Niagara's Charge.

HAVING dwelt forcibly on the Apostolic origin of the English Church, his Lordship preceeded:—I feel, my clerical brethren, that the arguments I have brought forward regarding the foundation, growth, preservation and reformation of our Church, ought to be known to all our people young and old. And how are they to learn them, unless they are taught them? And who are to teach them but ourselves? Verily, I believe that we are guilty in regard to this matter.

Other bodies of Christians around us are not so much afraid of teaching their principles as we have been in times past. A clerical friend sent me some weeks ago clippings containing "an appeal