

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.

CLVIII.

Of course, when I distinguish heresy before the Church from heresy before God, I mean only heresy as embodied in persons. The Church can not know men's hearts, but undoubtedly she can know the meaning of language, and undoubtedly every Roman Catholic is bound to believe that an authentic condemnation by the Church of any proposition as heretical is infallible. It is in such a case certainly heresy in the sense of the words. What it may be in the sense of the proposer, the Church does not pretend certainly to know. De secretis non judicat Ecclesia. "The Church judgeth not the thoughts of the heart." Like every human tribunal, she acquits or condemns men according to the best evidence before her. Even when she condemns a proposition "in the sense of the author," she means, and can only mean, in the sense which, in the connection, the words bear according to their usual acceptation, and which, therefore, the author must be presumed to have intended. She does not deny the possibility of eccentric mental formations, in which words would signify something very different from what they do in common use. Of such abstract possibilities she can not be held bound to take account, or her hands would be helplessly tied. Yet she does not deny (what it would be impious to deny) that God may know what she does not know, and may acquit a man of heresy whom she has condemned, and warrantably condemned.

Indeed, an undoubted Catholic might utter heresy, out of pure ignorance. For instance, says Bellarmine, an honest rustic, in a fit of unadvised zeal, might undertake to expound the doctrine of the Trinity to an unbeliever, and might, in his simplicity, confound the Persons or divide the Substance. His notions would be undoubted heresy, yet as he would not have a thought of contradicting the Church, he would only bring on himself an admonition not to meddle in matters too high for him. It is as to profane (see H. C. Lea) what wild positions the Spanish Inquisition passed over as of no account, because it was convinced that the parties could not have meant them heretically, or else were more or less of their heads. Protestants often view the Church of Rome as ever grimly on the watch for heretics and heretics within her bounds. They ought now and then to take a turn, and charge her with lamentable negligence in the matter. Doubtless there have been times and regions in which the one thing was true, and times and regions in which the other was. She would probably say, with an amused smile: "You have proved irrefragably each of your two contradictory allegations. I am obliged to you for making it so evident that on the whole I have kept so well in the middle."

Naturally a small body is more exposed to the vicissitudes of heresy hunting than a large. I am afraid that in beloved Presbyterians are just now, in our country, yielding to this temptation. The Free Baptist body, though little, is a remarkable instance of a denomination which, by discreet forbearance, saw Unitarian leanings indirectly die out within it. Even where propositions have been pronounced heresy, it does not follow that the proposer has been pronounced a heretic. He may have died before the question was decided. Thus five propositions of Bishop Jan Senius' book, the Augustinus, have been pronounced heretical, yet the Bishop himself never pronounced the Church to be heretic. She has been willing to presume that had he lived to hear the sentence, he would have accepted it. Those whose harsh zealotry cast his body secretly out of his cathedral and buried it in unconsecrated ground, had no authority from the Church to do this. There have even been found people capable of proposing to do the same for Bossuet.

Of course, then, it is not to be imagined for a moment that the Canon Law is disparaging the doctrine of infallibility of the Church, when it says: "God, in His judgments, always rests on infallible truth." The Church is sometimes compelled to depend on the uncertain and variable reports of men. Therefore it may well be, that he is loosed in the judgment of the Church who is bound in the judgment of God, and that he is bound in the judgment of the Church who is loosed in the judgment of God." Here, we see, the reference is only to the possibilities of error in judging persons, which the Church fully concedes, not to any possibility of error in determining doctrine.

It seems somewhat difficult to ascertain precisely what really was the theory of Boniface the Eighth as to the relations of Church and State. Nor is it of any very special importance to decide, inasmuch as it is set forth only in the introductory argument of the Unam Sanctam, and reasonings, even of a decree of faith, are confessedly not binding on belief, as is shown alike by Bellarmine, Perrone, Bessler, and virtually, through him by Pius the Ninth, as well as by the general consent of Catholic theology. I may remark that Professor Faulkner, for himself and me, having consulted the theological professors at Washington, received from them the same reply, as of course he would. Bellarmine, Perrone, Fessler, Pius IX., the Washington professors, and the general body of Cath-

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost.

GOOD AND BAD READING.

Brethren: I want to ask you a serious question this morning: What do you read? You read something, that is sure. The man or woman who does not read much can not read at all, and that is a class growing smaller and smaller every year. You read much, therefore a great quantity; but of what quality? For I didn't ask you how much, but what you read. What do you read? One says, I read politics, and that is good; another, I read business, and that is good; yet another says, I read for recreation, and that is good; and finally one says, I read to kill time. But, brethren, has it never struck you that it would be good to read some other than a great quantity? I will say, I read my prayer-book when I come to Mass. Oh, yes! And a poor little vest-pocket edition of a prayer-book it is; and I wish it was thumbed and more at prayers for confession and more preparation for Communion, and came to High Mass with you. Little offender.

Another might say: Father, what do you mean? Do you wish us to read the lives of the saints? Just so. Nothing so interesting and so profitable as the lives of saints, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is a puny little school-boy who has not read the life of George Washington or Robert Emmet once at least. But I would like to know how many of you big Christians ever read straight through one of those little lives of Christ which we call the Holy Gospels?—Christ, the Founder of your religion and the Redeemer of your soul. There do you not read it, or have Mary Ann read it, for a half hour during the long evenings of Advent and Lent? How often do we see a man on the centre table which cost many a good day's wages and is not worth a cent to you, but is all for show. There it lies, shut up tight and clasped, knowing only the visitation of the feather-duster from one end of the year to the other; save when a baby is born or somebody dies; then the great book is opened, a name is written down, the book is shut and clasped again. Brethren, what does this ignoring of your part of the Word of God practically mean? Just this: The Catholic religion is not yours; it belongs to the Church, the week you come to a little bit of the priest forms you out a little bit of the faith, and at more or less irregular intervals you come and see him privately and tender an account to him of the use you have made of his property. Religion is not personal; it is a family matter, part of a race tradition. If religion were a personal matter with you, you would read more about it, for you do so with all that really concerns you personally. Religion is part of a race tradition and that is about all. This sounds very hard, but it is in many cases all too true. Make your religion your own, let it be something personally yours, and begin with the Scriptures; not the false, Protestant sense, but the genuine and like a Catholic of intelligence.

What will the Scriptures do for me? I answer it will give you courage to bear your burdens. "This hath comforted me in my humiliation, because they were laid on me." (Ps. cxviii. 50.) It will strengthen your faith. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths." (Ibid. 105.) The reading of the Scriptures will give you liberty of spirit: "I have walked at large because I have sought after thy commandments." (Ibid. 110.) It will keep you out of the saloon and other occasions of sin. "Sinners have laid a snare for me, but I have not erred from thy precepts." (Ibid. 110.) It will give you a well-spring of hope: "I have purchased thy testimonies for an inheritance for ever, because they are the joy of my heart." (Ibid. 111.) Brethren, the reading of a chapter or two daily in the Holy Scriptures is both a cure and an antidote of sin; it will make going to Mass and receiving the Sacraments easy and joyful, will help you to a peaceful and quiet life, and secure you a good death. Amen.

Progress of Catholicity in Scotland. The progress of Catholicity in Scotland is most encouraging. Those cynical observers who complacently ignore statistics and pin their faith to what they will be quite surprised at the disclosures that the Rev. Michael Barrett, O. S. B., makes in Donahoe's Magazine for September. The learned Benedictine says: "The Catholics of Scotland at the present day, are made up of three constituent elements. There are the Highlanders, the Lowlanders, and the Scotch Irish; each group has its own characteristics, and each must be considered apart in estimating the quality of the Catholicity exhibited by the people which compose it. With regard to the first of these elements, we may roughly specify as Highlanders the people inhabiting the western isles,

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OUR BOYS AND GIRLS. A TRUE STORY. The following is one of the many favors granted by our Lord to those who are devoted to His Sacred Heart, and one that happened under the personal observation of the writer, who deems it a privilege and a pleasure to publish the same. During the summer of 1899, a gentleman hailing from one of our large northern cities appeared at a quiet old spot not far from the summit of the Blue Ridge Mountains. He seemed worried and extremely nervous and it was evident that some sorrow was weighing on his mind. At first he made no friends; in fact he avoided all communication with those around him. The Sunday after his arrival he arose early, as was his wont, and was soon seen walking to and fro on the porch in front of the place at which he was staying, evidently lost in deep thought. His attention was aroused by the sudden stop of a carriage in front of the inn where he was staying. The bright happy face of a stranger attracted him, and he longed to know who he was and where he was going. An inquiry, he was told that the new arrival was on his way to church. All during the day, as he afterward said, he felt a desire to speak to the young man. Fortunately, in the evening he received the desired introduction. "The people here have service rather early," he said in the course of the conversation. "Yes, we have Mass at 7 o'clock." "Mass! Mass!" and, as he repeated the word one might have seen his cheek crimson. A few inquiries brought out the fact that he was a Catholic, but had strayed from his faith long ago. It is said that an open confession is good for the soul, and certainly never was this more strikingly verified, as the sequel will show. The great faith and love of God shown by his newfound friend made him long for his lost faith, which he had so carelessly thrown away for the pleasure of the world. The story of his life won the sympathy of his hearer. It seems that he was the only son of wealthy parents, who had lavished upon him every mark of parental love. After he graduated college he held an important position in a large banking house, but with worldly success came spiritual decay. Finally, dishonest work was discovered; he was accused, and his resignation demanded. He protested his innocence, and requested a more thorough investigation, but everything pointed to him as the guilty party, and it was only his father's name and high standing that saved him from criminal prosecution. Even his friends believed him guilty, and his father, enraged at his supposed guilt, disinherited him. Only one believed him innocent, and that was his mother; but he had even denied the pleasure of seeing her before he left. "Five years have passed since then," he said, "and I have never seen her. My father says he never believed me innocent till I established my good name and am restored to my former position of trust. That will never come. I have hoped, and hoped in vain. How could heaven be so unjust?" "But," interrupted his friend, "were you true to heaven? He told you that you had thrown away the faith that God had given you. You sought justice from man, but you do not obtain it. Why not ask more of God? Why not seek the Heart of Jesus and place your case before Him and believe me, He will not fail to make the devotion of the nine months in His honor; pray to Him for your soul; tell Him you are sorry your past, and ask His pardon, promising to lead a new life if He helps in your trial." After a few explanations of the votion of the Sacred Heart, it was agreed that both should make the Friday. The novena began on the first Friday of September and on the morning of the first Friday of October at one of the early Masses, in a church in Baltimore, the unfortunate gentleman knelt before a statue of the Sacred Heart. "O my Jesus," he prayed, "Thee with my whole heart. Sorry for having offended Thee, merciful to me, and if it is Thy will, restore my good name as I am back home." At 11 o'clock the same day received a telegram calling him. The real culprit had confessed crime. Our friend reached home as met by his anxious parents, who saw their mistake. Of the man with his mother we shall say no more for there are in life scenes so that we draw a veil over them and keep them only in memory. There was, he said, nothing to forgive, since the trial had been a grace that led to a better life. He was at once restored to his position, and instead of prosecution real truth he has shown him to be his ways and he bids fair to be a true apostle of the Sacred Heart. Annals of St. Anthony's Shrine, South.