



MASSACRE OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

By a Protestant Theologian in The Sacred Heart Review.

IV.

We have seen that in France, during the latter part of the reign of Henry II., and during the reigns of his three sons, Francis II., Charles IX., and Henry III., a space of about thirty-five years, not only civil war between the two religions, but assassination and massacre, were the order of the day. We have seen that the Catholics, being something more than three times as numerous as the Protestants, appear,—on Dr. Fisher's estimate—to have massacred about 35,000 Huguenots, while the Protestants appear to have massacred about 8,000 Catholics. This hideous emulation, therefore, turns out thus far unfavorably for the Catholics, by about 11,000 victims. If anybody says 14,000, I will not reclaim. On the other hand, during this time the Catholic massacres were massacres simply, attended by no protracted torments. It was not so with the Protestant massacres of Catholics. The Calvinists seem seldom, if ever, to have tortured the lay Catholics whom they murdered, but there seems to have been no limit to their cruelties towards priests and monks. Read Cardinal Bellarmine's complaints, and the ghastly instances that he adduces. Cardinal Guise, at the Council of Trent, some nine years before St. Bartholomew's, stated that the Protestants of France, within a few years before, had done to death, by protracted tortures, three thousand monks and secular priests, because they would not abandon their religion. As this accusation was raised in the face of all Europe, and does not appear to have been contradicted, and as Cardinal Bellarmine's allegations, which he gives only as instances that had come to his particular knowledge, fully agree with it, I judge that we are not at liberty to reject it.

I think it will hardly be disputed that the instincts of humanity are more outraged by the murder of one man in slow agony than by the butchery of ten men in hot blood. If this is so, the Catholics, notwithstanding their 11,000 victims in excess, are likely to fall short of the palm of infernal cruelty. It passes rather to the Calvinists. The present writer is a Calvinist, and a decided Calvinist, but he is very thankful that he was not a French Calvinist of those days, for what reason has he to suppose that he should have done differently from his brethren? I do not know that we can accuse the Lutherans, for although I believe there was even then a certain number of Lutherans in northeastern France, I do not learn that they were much infected with the fierce fanaticism of the Huguenots. I judge them to have partaken rather of the more moderate temper of their German brethren.

The seed of St. Bartholomew's was planted in the massacre of Vassy, ten years earlier. Johnson's Cyclopedia says that the Duke of Guise recommenced the civil war against the Protestants in this massacre. This is not Guizot's statement, nor Froude's.

Guizot wavers, but Froude, who certainly will not be suspected of favoring the Catholics overmuch, puts the blame explicitly on the Calvinists, although they were the victims. Froude is very poor evidence against the Catholics, but for that very reason excellent evidence for them. I will give his statement.

The great Duke of Guise, in whose character, remarks Guizot, as in that of all the other great Frenchmen of that time, of both religions, good had to contend strongly with evil, without being finally overcome by it, was passing, on March 1, 1562, between Paris and his province. As it was a festival day, he stopped at Vassy, not far from Paris, to hear the Mass. The Calvinists had built their temple right alongside of the church, doubtless, says Froude, to plague the Papists. They, too, had a service then, and were singing Marot's psalms at their loudest, so that nothing could be heard in the church. The Duke at length sent a courteous message, begging that they would suspend their psalmody for a quarter of an hour, by which time the Mass would be over. Thereupon, says Froude, they began bellowing louder than ever. Some lads of the Duke's train strolled over to the open doors of the temple, and began making faces at the people, for which they were pushed and thumped by big boys of the Huguenot congregation. They raised a cry, and, before the Duke could learn anything of it, some forty or fifty of the unarmed Protestants had been cut down by the Duke's men-at-arms. Learning what was passing, Guise rushed out of the church and stopped the massacre, but the flame of excitement spread throughout France, and the war recommenced.

Ranke's narrative, as I understand it, (and I was surprised to see this view taken by the great Protestant writer) represents the Huguenots, through all this time, as peculiarly disposed to sudden rebellion. Froude makes them out at least equally inflammable with their rivals. Guizot, although, as a French Protestant, he does not, like Ranke, emphasize the provocations given by the Huguenots, says nothing much at variance with Ranke. It is not strange if the Protestants at that time were peculiarly seditious. They were led by the discontented part of the nobility, and these again by the mutinous branch of the royal house. They accepted toleration as a mere makeshift, but their hope was to force their religion on the whole nation at the point of the sword. Unless they could do this speedily, while zeal was yet fresh and flaming, there was small chance that they would ever be able to do it at all. Without, therefore, assuming the French Protestants to have been in themselves any more disposed to sedition than the Catholics, we can easily see how they were more inclined to rebel against a king of the hostile religion than the Catholics against a king of their own religion, and how they should be more impatient, in their uncertainty of their new enterprise, than the Catholics, for whom patience was the most effectual weapon.

The next step towards St. Bartholomew's was the murder of the Duke of Guise, not the cause, but the innocent occasion, of the bloodshed of Vassy. As the Huguenots were determined to

suffer no Catholicism in France, so the League, of which Guise was the head, was equally determined to suffer no Protestantism. Between these two extremes lay the great body of the indifferents, and of the moderate Catholics, of which last the illustrious Chancellor Hospital was the representative. Guise, although the head of the League, was too great a man to be the slave of his feelings. He could see plainly that the extermination of Calvinism from France was virtually impossible. If the Protestants would accept a regulated freedom of worship, and eligibility to civil trusts; would consent that the Huguenot heir should become a Catholic; and would definitely abandon all thoughts of suppressing the Church, I can hardly suppose but that Guise, in his large statesmanship, would have consented, although perhaps his party would have been too strong for him. Be this as it may, he was the head of the League, and therefore, in the eyes of the Calvinists, was the incarnation of everything which they hated. They thirsted for his blood, and they soon had it. His assassination is the second step towards the great massacre.

The third step was the accusation raised, and firmly believed, by the younger Guise and his house, and by the League, that the assassination of the great Duke was plotted by Coligni, the head of the Protestant interest while Henry Bourbon was young. Coligni protested, and I think with truth that he had known nothing of the plot of the assassin Poltrot, who, from a fanatical Catholic, had become an equally fanatical Protestant, and who waylaid and shot the great Duke. Yet, as it was shown that Poltrot had spread everywhere among the Protestants the rumor of his intended deed, and as it was acknowledged that Coligni had used him as a spy, and had furnished him with the money and the horse which enabled him to commit the murder, it is not strange that the Catholics were convinced that the Admiral was an accessory before the fact. Coligni seemed determined that they should believe this, for he openly declared to them that he viewed the murder of Guise as an unspeakable benefit to religion, and exulted in it, passing by the immediate instrument, as a wonderful interposition of God in favor of the true faith.

What did the Huguenots generally say?

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The death of Mr. Wm. McDonald took place at St. Boniface hospital Friday night. Deceased had his feet badly frozen in Gladstone last winter and about four months ago was brought to the hospital, suffering from blood poisoning. His foot was amputated, after which other complications set in, from which he succumbed. The remains were removed to the undertaking parlors of Clarke Bros. & Hughes, from which place the funeral took place on Monday to St. Boniface cathedral and cemetery.

A physician is not always at hand. Guard yourself against sudden coughs and colds by keeping a bottle of Pain-Killer in the house. Avoid substitutes. There is but one Pain-Killer, Perry Davis's. 25c. and 50c.

THE LEADING AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH.

Providence Visitor.

The Congregationalist in a recent issue cites Mirart's late defection as an example of the waning of Catholic Faith, and pretends to find in the Church's refusal to recognize in her subjects the right of private interpretation in doctrinal matters, an obstacle to the future conversion of non-Catholics and an occasion of future secession to many intelligent people at present within the fold. The forecast of our contemporary, though solemn and significant, excites no anxiety in the Catholic breast. We notice it simply to call attention to the fact that what seems to our contemporary the great offence of the Church against the dignity of human reason, seems to us most reasonable, and to assure him that there is in the whole range of Catholic doctrine no dogma more agreeable to the sane Catholic mind than that which asserts the absolute incompatibility between Catholic Faith and the right of private interpretation in doctrinal matters. An understanding of the attitude of the Church on this matter is impossible to those outside the fold, simply because they refuse to form a clear idea of the mission of the Church as instituted by Christ. There are but two possible conceptions of a Church—either we must consider it as an aggregation of individuals each enjoying the right of expounding to himself the written word of God and so, absolutely independent of all others in all his belief, or we must view it as a living teaching organism, a body commissioned to represent God on earth and to teach men in His name. No one who has read the New Testament can pretend to accept the former definition, as is evidenced by the fact that the "reformers" who promised the greatest liberty to human reason still demanded a certain agreement among their followers in what they were pleased to call "essentials." If this idea of the Church was held then, surely, any authority which would attempt to saddle its own doctrines on such self-sufficient judges of God's truth would thereby convict itself of the worst form of tyranny; but that no such idea of the Church prevails at present is simply proven by the various confessions to which non-Catholics are compelled to subscribe as an essential condition of Church membership. There then remains but one reasonable conception of the mission of the Church, namely, that it is a Divinely commissioned teaching body endowed with the prerogative of teaching religious truth in the name and by the authority of God.

This definition of a church once admitted, not only does infallibility with its consequent exclusion of the right of private interpretation in doctrinal matters appear rational and agreeable, but so essential a characteristic of such church, that any religion not claiming such divine prerogative does, by its very absence of such claim, convict itself of its own folly. To pretend to teach truth in the name of God; to pretend to teach it in virtue of a Divine commission, and still to admit that in that teaching there is no guarantee against error, is surely as great a travesty against reason

as the human mind can conceive of. To assume that Eternal Truth in the enjoyment of omnipotence has taken no means to protect itself against error, is certainly an assumption that does small credit to Divinity. Then there must be some way which God has established to convey His truth to men; His whole truth and the truth undefiled. The Gospel narrative can surely be relied on to indicate what that way is, and so let us glance back at it. Whoever reads the Gospel must admit that if there is anything in it that is beyond the possibility of doubt, it is that Christ constituted the Apostles a teaching body when he says: "Going therefore teach all nations; . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Their teaching was to include all truths taught by Him with never a distinction between the truths taught by Him and afterwards to be recorded by the inspired writers and those which would not thus be recorded. Now, truth is not of a nature to exclude development, and so the Master, who, in private word or veiled parable, sowed the seed of future belief, was as much the teacher of the teacher of this ulterior development of truth as is the sower of seed the sower of the fruit which is but the development of the seed once sown. But the question may be asked, How does any proof of infallibility result from such Divine commission to teach, even admitting that the Apostles were thus warranted to develop any truth left by Christ in the germ state? What guarantee can we have that the Apostles might not, when no longer under the spell of the Master's presence, pervert the truths taught by Him? Let us remember that the very "raison d'être" of that apostolic commission was to supply the absence of Christ from earth until the end of time and we will at once understand that the commission was to endure as long as such substitution would be required. Now, if we consult St. Matthew (Chap. 28, v. 20) we find that not only was their commission to endure throughout all time but that, throughout all time, they were to enjoy the guarantee of perpetual union with Christ, the "Way, the Truth and the Life": "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Now, then, since the Catholic understands by infallibility nothing more or less than the perpetual union between the teacher and the eternal truth, a union which renders the teacher impossible to be deceived, can one see in this promise of Christ anything else except the guarantee of infallibility for His Church whenever she speaks in His name to those whom she has been commissioned to teach?

The exclusive right of the Catholic Church to the succession of the first apostolate is so clear that even those, to whom the name Catholic was once a term of execration, now pose as Catholics. And the exclusive claim of the Church to teach infallibly, instead of giving offence to intelligent Catholics, is, on the contrary, one of the strongest proofs of her Divine mission, giving to her children the assurance of the possession of the truth, as Protestantism's inability to lay claim to it is a real proof of its consciousness of its lacking Divine origin.