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DEC. 20, 1903.

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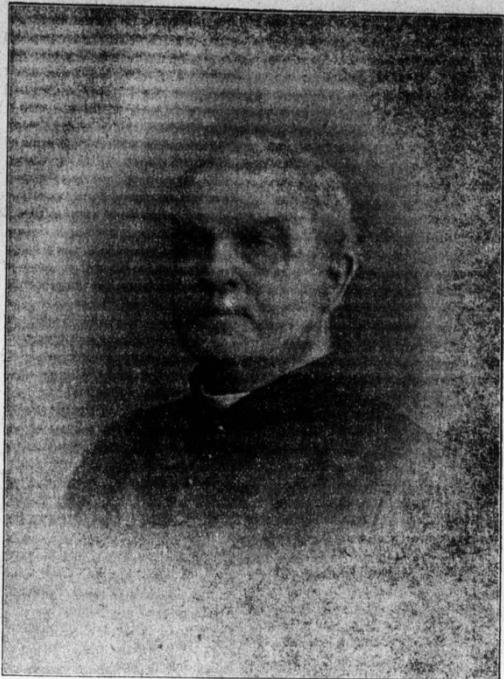
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IN MEMORIAM OF FATHER DOWD.



REV. P. DOWD.

To-day is the anniversary of the death of Father Dowd—second pastor of St. Patrick's Church, Montreal. The "True Witness" cannot honor the occasion in a more fitting manner and offer its tribute to the memory of the noble and affectionate spiritual guide of the good old days than in publishing extracts from the sermon which he delivered on the last New Year's Day he occupied the pulpit of his beloved Church. It is as follows:—

Our passing time, said the saintly pastor, brings us together once more to reflect on the solemn fact, that another year is gone by, and that we have taken another step towards the grave.

It is very proper for us to rejoice, and to congratulate one another on the promise of a new year; we may even make projects and plans for its happiness; but yet the serious fact is there, that one of the few years of our life is gone for ever; and that we are brought a year nearer to our graves. This reflection naturally brings on another which is not less serious, are we better prepared now for our graves, and eternity, than we were on the first day of last year? It is our interest to give this question an honest answer, to say simply yes or no, before we allow one day of the new year to pass. Hence if we have made some progress in the service of God since this year twelve months; if we have now fewer vices, and have acquired some new virtues; if, in a word, we have advanced our preparation for our last home,—the grave; then we see what we have to do this new year. We have to persevere, we have to add merit to merit by daily increasing our fervor in the service of God. If, on the other hand, we must acknowledge that we are even worse prepared to-day, than we were this year last year, for our own graves and for eternity, then our duty is

clear; we must know that the new year is given us in order that we may repent of, and cancel in the Sacrament of Penance the sins committed during the past year; in the intentions of God the new year is given you for no other purpose. All time is given to prepare for eternity.

The first duty, therefore, of our time is to employ it in renouncing every obstacle to a happy eternity. Sin is the only obstacle. Sin has therefore to be removed; it must be cancelled—destroyed in the Sacrament of Penance, on the condition that we have a true and sincere sorrow for having committed it and a firm resolution to lead a new life. This newness of life will consist in a sincere determination to redeem our lost time by a regular, constant, and fervent discharge of all our duties to God. In this way alone can we maintain this newness of life, and make atonement for the sins of omission we have committed by the frequent abuse of the richest gifts and graces with which we were favored by God.

The use we are expected to make of the present year, must be determined by the use we made of the past year. Hence it is our duty to enter upon a strict examination of our conduct during the past year. It is true that past time cannot be recalled in order to use it again; past time is beyond our reach; it is no longer ours, and can never become ours again; it has passed into the hands of God to be examined and judged. Yes, this is exactly the nature of past time. It has passed out of our hands, into the hands of God, to be examined and judged. But by giving us the use of the present time of the new year, God permits us to act on the past time of the old year in the same manner He does. We can examine and judge it. And if our examination is well made, if our judgment be correct and in accordance with the laws of Divine Justice, we can control and determine the examination and final judgment of God. In this way, and in this way alone, we can act on the past time of the old year. In every other possible respect it is gone from us for ever.

I said that if the examination and judgment of our conduct during the past year be properly made, we can control and determine the final judgment of God.

ment of God. Yes, brethren, this is true. In giving us the use of the present time of the new year, God also gives us an extraordinary privilege. By the proper use of the present moment, you can change all the past.

Is it not true that judged by your conduct during the past year you would have been condemned as guilty.

In reality what was your conduct during the past year? You committed not one, but perhaps many mortal sins; you abused not one day, nor one week of the past year by living in a state of sin, and in the habit of committing sin, but perhaps you spent the great part of the past year in the state of mortal sin, all the time an enemy to God. All this you can now change; employ the new year which God gives you in sincerely repenting of these faults, you can blot them all out, your sins, no matter how numerous will be forgiven, the judgment that hung over your head on account of them will be reversed, and from having been the enemy of God, you will become his beloved friend.

And to effect this wonderful change to blot out your sins, and to make you friends from having been the enemies of God, how long, how much of the new year will be required? A moment, a single moment of time. No longer is required. The new year comes to you, as Christians, teaming with all the merits of the death and passion of our blessed Redeemer. A moment of Christians' time is worth an eternity in heaven. You are guilty of mortal sin, of a million of mortal sins; by a moment of true repentancy of sincere sorrow for your sins with absolution, all is blotted out, and from being victims of hell, you become the children of Heaven.

I will go further. If a moment of your time, of your Christian time of grace, were given to the souls of the damned in hell, that moment of grace would empty hell of all its unhappy souls, and would transfer them to the regions of eternal bliss. Beloved brethren, will this suffice to enlighten you as to the value of this new year, and of the debt of gratitude you owe to God for it. A moment of this new year will suffice to efface not only the sins of the past year, but the sins of all the years of your

past life. Value therefore the time of grace that is given you in this new year. Don't lose a moment of it. You can make of every moment of it the price of eternity. You were created for eternity, you were created to live for ever in heaven. The good use of the new year can secure for you a happy eternity, can make you worthy of the bliss of heaven.

Besides the immense value of the time of this Christian new year, you have another urgent motive to spend it well,—the uncertainty you are in whether this will be your last year, or not. And in regard to this uncertainty also, you can receive instruction from the old year. Where are the many well known faces that were to be met with this day last year,—some of them were present in this congregation? How many gaps have been in your family circles since this day twelve months? And they who have left us, were not all old; some were in the prime life, even some had not yet reached the prime of life; all of them, on this day last year were as full of hope that they would enjoy the whole year, as you are to-day. Yet, it was not to be so. They were beginning their last year, and they did not know it. And so it is to-day. There are many amongst us, and some of them are here present, who are beginning their last year, and they do not know it, they do not even give it a serious thought.

Then be wise, and under this uncertainty resolve to begin this new year in the same manner, as if you were certain it was to be your last year. If disappointed, that is if you are spared longer, you lose nothing; but if not disappointed, you gain everything. This serious advice concerns all—the young and the old alike. "What I say to you, I say to all Watch." Watch, for you know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man will come."

The Catholic Church And the Bible.

"Critic" writes as follows in the New York "Freeman's Journal":— I have just read an article, contributed by the Rev. David Tice to the "Christian Advocate," entitled, "An Archbishop's Mistake." As the article deals with the position of the Catholic Church in respect of the reading of the Scriptures, some account of it may prove of interest to your readers. The initial paragraph is as follows:

"Archbishop Ryan's article in 'The Baltimore Tablet' in May contains what must be regarded as an astonishing statement, contrary to the well-known history of the Roman Catholic Church. These are his words as published: 'The Church does not hide the Scriptures from the people. She does not and never did forbid the people to read the word of God. On the contrary, she recommends her children to read the Scriptures.'"

The Rev. David Tice considers this statement "astonishing." Truth, however, is indeed often stranger than fiction. The fiction industriously propagated by a certain class of our separated brethren is, that Catholics are forbidden to read the Scriptures; the truth is, that they are encouraged to do so. Mr. Tice nevertheless is determined, as he says, to "furnish the proof at once from his (the Archbishop's) own Church" that Catholics are forbidden to read the Scriptures. The proof consists of quotations from the Council of Toulouse (1229), the Council of Trent, Cardinal Bellarmine, Gregory XVI., Pius IX. and of references to the Council of Constance (1415), and the University of Copenhagen (1418).

The statement of the Archbishop is threefold:

- 1. The Church does not hide the Scriptures from the people.
- 2. She does not and never did forbid the people to read the Word of God.
- 3. On the contrary, she recommends her children to read the Scriptures.

If No. 3 can be satisfactorily proved, it will follow that "The Church does not hide the Scriptures from the people" (No. 1); and that "She does not . . . forbid her children to read the Scriptures" (part of No. 2). The assertion that the Church "never did forbid the people to read the word of God" will then remain to be answered.

First, then, let us see if it be true that "the Church recommends her children to read the Scriptures." Mr. Tice must be aware of the fact that the Catholic laity have a number of translations of the Bible into English, such as the Douay version, the same version revised by Dr. Challoner, the excellent translation of Bishop Kenrick; and that Catholic publishers are advertising and selling translations of the Bible to Catholic laymen who, therefore, presumably read these translations. He, perhaps, is aware that the Bible is also translated for the use of Catholic laymen into the other tongues of civilization; and that translations into Middle English and German were made before those of Wycliff and Luther. If Catholics are forbidden to read the Scriptures, it surely must seem strange to Mr. Tice that the prohibition has met and is meeting so much opposition from authorized Catholic publishers and even from an Archbishop of the Church. Should he not, in simple prudence, ask himself whether his view of the prohibition is correct? But perhaps Catholics are evading the law and acting contrary to the spirit of the Church? One little fact should dispel such a notion. When Archbishop Martini, of Florence, had translated the Bible into Italian, Pope Pius VI. wrote to him in the following laudatory terms:

"At a time when a vast number of bad books, which most grossly attack the Catholic religion, are circulated among the unlearned, to the great destruction of souls, you judge exceedingly well that the faithful should be excited to the reading of the Holy Scriptures. For these are the most abundant sources which ought to be left open to every one, to draw from them purity of morals and of doctrine, to eradicate the errors which are so widely disseminated in these corrupt times. This you have seasonably effected, as you declare, by publishing the Sacred Writings in the language of your country, suitable to every one's capacity; especially when you show and set forth that you have added explanatory notes, which, being extracted from the holy Fathers, preclude

every possible danger of abuse. Thus you have not swerved either from the laws of the Congregation of the Index, on this subject by Benedict XIV., that immortal Pope, our predecessor in the Pontificate, and formerly when we held a place near his person, our excellent master in ecclesiastical learning; circumstances which we mention as honorable to us. We therefore applaud your eminent learning, joined with your extraordinary piety, and we return to you our due acknowledgment for the books you have transmitted to us, and which, when convenient, we will read over. In the mean time, as a token of our Pontifical benevolence, receive our Apostolic Benediction, which to you, beloved son, we very affectionately impart. Given at Rome, on the Calends of April, 1778, the fourth year of our Pontificate."

Can anything be conceived as warmer approbation than this? Could any more thorough reply be made to the fiction that Catholics are forbidden to read the Scriptures? The commendation is not languid and perfunctory, but warm and energetic; and the Pope declares that the translator has judged "exceedingly well that the faithful should be excited to the reading of the Holy Scriptures." He further declares that in translating the Bible into Italian, the learned Archbishop Martini had not "swerved either from the laws of the Congregation of the Index, or from the Constitution published on this subject by Benedict XIV."

And now there remains but the question: "Did the Church ever forbid the people to read the word of God? The question might be answered in the same way as an American would answer this question: Did the United States ever forbid its people the right of trial by jury? In both cases the reply might very well be "No." And yet, in some particular instances, the United States did and does forbid the use of the prerogative of trial by jury; namely, where martial law has been proclaimed in some particular locality. In the same way the Church did forbid the people to read unauthorized versions of the Bible. Against such versions a Catholic has surely a right to protest; and I presume that Mr. Tice would not be diligent in encouraging his flock to read the Douay version of the Bible, and might be heard from in protest against the reading of that Catholic version in the public schools. Would such action of his be fairly described as a prohibition of the Bible to his flock, or to their children?

The position of the Church on the whole question might be summarized as follows:—

- I. Catholics are encouraged to read the sacred Scriptures.
- II. In some authorized version.
- III. With due reverence for the inspired text, with humility, with a desire to profit spiritually.

To return to the Bible societies. It would be surprising, indeed, if the Church did not protest against the industry of men whose avowed object was to pervert the faith of simple Catholics by translations which omitted some of the Sacred Books, and corrupted the text of the others. Luther added the word "alone" to the text of St. Paul (Rom., iii., 28): "We account a man to be justified by faith," making it read, "We account a man to be justified by faith alone."

Was this reverent? Was it not tricky? Tyndal rendered "anointing" by "smearing" (smearing), "consecrate" by "charm," "priest" by "senior," "church" by "congregation," "sacraments" by "ceremonies," and "ceremonies" by "withcraft," and all this because he so hated "popery."

Beza was a master at corrupting the text; in changing punctuation, and thus trying to alter the meaning; in substituting a wrong word for the one in the Sacred Text, and so on; he frankly confesses his purpose of dealing in a spirit of sectarian apologies. The story of the obloquy heaped by the Reformers on one another's versions is as interesting as it is instructive. A Catholic may well be pardoned if without taking trouble to scrutinize the infinite possibilities of error offered by the many Protestant versions of the Bible, he prefers to forbid them in general to his children. And the Church may very well adopt a similar attitude toward her children.

Mr. Tice concludes by asking a question very easy to answer, namely: "To what country or people the Roman Church has given the 'open Bible'?" Even a moderately well read man should unhesitatingly answer, "To every country and people." Mr. Tice joins to this another question: "Did the people of Mexico, or Cuba, or the Philippines receive the Bible from that source?" The answer to such a bewilderingly foolish question is: "Why, of course, and didn't you know that already?"