Sacred Heart Review.

PROTESTANT CONTROVERSY.

BY A PROTESTANT MINISTER.

XCIV.

Dean Hodges says that by the year 1517 everything at Wittenberg was ready for the Reformation, because two things were found there which were certain to issue in it. One of these was the open Bible, with its logical accompaniment, the privilege of independent interpretation. The other was the doctrine of justication by faith, with its emphasis upon sincerity and its hatred of a sham.

It might be wished, perhaps, that Dean Hodges was a little more precise in defining what he means here. I am afraid he is not wholly disengaged from our common Protestant habit of running off glibly certain commonplaces of commendation concerning the Reformation, the exact force of which is rather hard to find, and the application of which to Luther and his design is somewhat doubtful.

To begin with the open Bible: Does Dr. Hodges affirm that the Bible was more freely read at Wittenberg than it was throughout Germany, and throughout Catholic Christendom at large? I do not know how we make this out. I have never seen anything of Luther's claiming any such preeminence for his University. I am not deeply read in Luther (Professor Nippold says there are few *Lutheran* divines that are that), but I have caught up all sorts of sayings of his, on all sorts of saying of his, on all sorts of subjects given out during the twenty-nine years of his Protestant life, and I can not call to mind any in which he makes this invidious distinction between Wittenberg and the rest of the world as regards the freedom of Bible reading. We have seen how curiously amiss it is to explain his statements concerning his own early ignorance of the Bible as implying that there had been anything put in the way of reading it. He was ignorant of the Bible because he had given himself up almost entirely to the reading of the pagan classics, before the sudden shock which sent him into a monastery.

Even in Spain, as early as Isabella, the Church put out a Spanish Bible for popular reading. The alarms of the Reformation afterwards induced the Inquisition to prescribe this, until it re-issued it three centuries later (see Rule), but it did not proscribe the Latin Bible, and it was the Latin Bible, (with the Greek and Hebrew) that was commonly read at Wittenberg in 1517. Spain prided herself on extending the circulation of the magnificent Complutensian polyglot of Cardinal Ximenes. As late as the time of St. Theresr we find educated women in Spain freely reading the Latin Bible, and I do not learn that any restriction ensued subsequently. The familiar Bible reading of the nuns of Nuremberg was accompanied by so staunch a resistance to Lutheranism that we are safe in assuming that the habit of Scripture study here was an independent intraconventual tradition, much earlier than the Reformation. In brief, unless Dean Hodges gives new evidence, I think we may say pretty confidently that in 1517 the Bible was no more largely "an open Bible" at Wittenberg than at Cologne, or Paris, or Toledo, or Rome, or Constantinople. Perhaps I should except Paris, for at that time the stiff, degenerated scholasticism of the Sorbonne would not be moved to deeper Scriptural study even by the high example of Louvain and the higher example of Rome. As a Protestant I naturally sympathize with the Gallican liberties, but I must acknowledge that this particular exercise of the Gallican liberties is not very edifying. It does not sound well for Paris to denounce the Greek and Hebrew studies which Rome is encouraging.

I think, therefore, that we must surrender these outer intrenchments, and own up that in 1517 the Bible was no more widely open at Wittenberg than in the Christian world generally. Perhaps we can do better by falling back on the inner line of our works. Yet here there is a point hard to hold. Dean Hodges says that where the Bible is open, there naturally follows freedom of intrepretation. Then since in 1517, the Bible was open from London to Naples and Seville, it should follow that there was freedom of Biblical intrepretation from London to Naples and Seville. And so there was, and is. There were certain doctrines defined by the Church as of faith. There were certain points of Biblical interpretation held to be conclusively settled by unanimous consent of the Fathers. This leaves the vast bulk of Biblical questions subject to the free judgment of individual divines. Read a Catholic theology of some extent (not a simple compend of ascertained points) and a Protestant will often be surprised at the liberty assumed by the writer of differing from a Father, or a Doctor, or from a Pope where the Pope does not define. The divergence of opinion is of course expressed respectfully, but this does not restrain it from covering a wide scope. It is astonishing how small the differences of opinion are which in various Protestant denominations ensure a minister's deposition, if not his excommunication. In various Protestant bodies a man, especially a minister, may easily lose his standing by a mere divergence of opinion on some secondary question of polity or even of policy. I have known of a Congregational minister's being threatened with expulsion for doubting whether the order of deacons was instituted by revelation, a point which Bellarmine remarks the Church has never determined. So also I have known a Congregational minister to be deposed because he preferred Calvin's theory of the Sabbath to the Puritan. If some of these denominations, especially of the Methodist family, would admit of one third part of that freedom of opinion which we find, I will not say in the Catholic Church, but even in some religious orders, especially the Franciscans or the Jesuits, they would have more liberty than they would know what to do with. They would have to admit it by instalments, or they might easily explode into the air.

However, Dean Hodges will remind us that whereas in the Catholic Church there are certain points of doctrine and interpretation finally fixed, in Protestantism nothing is finally fixed. Is this really the case? Is it then not even yet ascertained whether the New Testament teaches the personal being of God, the Creation, the native corruption of Man, the revelation of the Divine Word in humanity, a true atoning Redemption, the inward renewal of the elect by the Holy Spirit, a Providence controlling all events of nature and history, life eternal and the second death? Will not those who accept and those who reject these doctrines concur in owning that they are Biblical? As Theodore Parker used to say: "I don't believe that Jesus Christ is God, but it appears to me that Paul and John do." If so, then there is an important body of central doctrines fixed, not subject to revision. President Eliot, it is true, though calling himself, with undoubted sincerity, a Christian believer, yet declares, like Unitarians generally, that he denies hell, the devil, original sin, and of course, as a Unitarian, he denies the Godhead of Christ, with which goes atonement. Yet I can hardly suppose that President Eliot, any more than a Jew or Moslem, would deny that the doctrines which I have mentioned above are explicit and central in the New Testament. He would simply regard the New Testament as a crude beginning, not a present norm of Christian belief. This would explain how, a number of years back, writing on theological education, he could propose, as I saw stated in print (I have never read his article) to make the New Testament in certain cases an elective. This astounded me, but I have since learned not to be astounded at any religious performances of our self-admiring Unitarian friends. They dwell on an Olympian height which is beyond all scrutiny of us plain Christians, Protestants or Catholics! I understand, however, that for the eminent lay Metropolitan of Massachusetts Unitarianism there is one fixed and central doctrine, subject to no revision in *saecula saeculorum*. This is, not election, but electives No wonder, then, if even the New Testament should be called to bow its neck to this late discovered, but inalienable right of nascent humanity, and to be studied or thrown aside at the pleasure of the newly-bearded embryo divine.

Reverting from Unitarianism to those Protestant bodies which lie entirely within the Christian line, Dean Hodges suggests some further questions.

CHARLES C. STARBUCK.

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North Cambridge, Mass.

CROMWELL IN IRELAND.

Mr. Morley in the Century; Rev. Geo McDermot in the Catholic World.

In the current issue of the Century, Mr. John Morley continues his interesting papers on Cromwell. He comes, in this paper, to deal with Cromwell's career in Ireland. Upon the whole, he is, as we expected he would be, calmly and coldly just. There is no impassioned denunciation, such as an Irishman would naturally indulge in. Nor is there, on the other hand, any attempt at justification or even extenuation. The brutal cynicism with which Carlyle attempts to justify the infamies at Drogheda and at Wexford is shown up, as it deserves to be. The only objection we have to make is that the facts, both as regards Drogheda and Wexford, are understated. He gives only Cromwell's own account in his report to the parliament; and, brutally frank as that report is in some respects, it does not tell of the massacre of women and the spitting of infants. These facts, therefore, do not appear in Mr. Morley's account at all.

As a supplement to Mr. Morley's paper, we would advise our readers to read an interesting paper on Cromwell by Rev. George McDermot, which will appear in the July issue of the Catholic World Magazine. From advance sheets which have been furnished to us, we extract the following passage regarding Cromwell's Irish career:

"The truth about Cromwell's method in Ireland is that he aimed to succeed there as he aimed to succeed in England, by any means that would not alienate his supporters. He might safely slaughter every man, woman and child in an Irish town, burn every house and cottage, fling a storm of fire on every field upon his march, because in doing so he would have the enthusiastic approval of the houses, of the Presbyterians and of the sectaries of of all kinds, and he would in addition have the secret sympathy of the English Royalists. In England it would not do to give way to his savage impulses; he knew where to stop, for knowledge of character, in which he surpassed most others, restrained him among the Indepeddents and Delsts, the Fifth Monarchy men and the zealots of Deuteronomy, the Presbyterians, so calculating and pitiless, the mad sergeants who could not pass a church without ascending the pulpit, the dreadful fanatics who were inspired to overthrow all government. He walked amid these difficulties with an astuteness hidden, as the occasion served, under a blunt familiarity or a coarse buffoonery or a solemnity to which the strong, manly lines of his face could impart that appearance of mystic elevation never seen in the merely vulgar hypocrite. He was the prince of actors because for the time his passions, all the powers of his mind, entered into the part he was playing. He was in many respects great; his military genius and organizing power in military affairs were of no common order. He had little talent for constructive government, but he had confidence in himself; and so with an ambition that was unbounded he employed without scruple any means which led to his gratification. With an affectionateness of disposition toward his own family worthy of a simple and homely training he united in affairs of state a ferocious perfidy, cynical in its coldness, terrible in its courage. His very hypocrisy, reaching beyond the imagination of Moliere and the reality of Tacitus, blinded all by the bonhomie, brusqueness, abandon, which covered it. It was the simulation of ideal candor, and from his entrance to Parliament until 1648 it deceived every one; from 1648 it deceived the soldiers and continued to deceive them until the end. It was fortunate for him that when all others had ceased to trust him the army remained faithful.

"These are not the opinions of prejudice. They were the views of all men at home and abroad until, early in the nineteenth century, certain French Liberals suggested political theories which started a train of thought among the Whigs and Nonconformists of England tending to a revision of the old judgment. If the verdict of history is to be set aside, one is entitled to demand the new evidence.

FIVE-MINUTES' SERMON.

BAD BOOKS.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

"Beware of false prophets." (Matt. 7:15)

When our Divine Redeemer so earnestly warned us to beware of false prophets who come to us in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly are ravening wolves, companions of Satan and murderers of souls, He undoubtedly had in the eye of His all-seeing mind a class of seducers, which in His time were but few, but which in our day are so numerous that they lead the greatest number of victims to hell—and these are bad books, the writings of infidelity and immorality.

Sad experience teaches us that a human seducer can do sufficient harm, but even the most wicked attendant of Satan is as a harmless child, in comparison with a vicious book. A seducer can enchain and enslave his victims only singly; an immoral book, however, can lead thousands at a time to the devil. A seducer, no matter how wicked he may be, is ashamed to call some things by their proper names; a vicious book, however, knows nothing of the blush of shame; it speaks not only in words, but also in pictures.

A scandal-giver can only do his diabolical work when the occasion presents itself, but a bad book is available at all times, by day or night, to unveil before its readers the mysteries of human depravity, or at least cause them to be perceived through a thin veil. An immoral book is read again and again, the mind dwells with pleasure on the alluring descriptions, the soul is filled with unchaste pictures and impure imaginations, the slumbering passions are awakened and Satan triumphantly cries out: "The work is accomplished, one more soul that belonged to God is now mine. I will enchain it securely that it shall not escape." Ah, terrible victory of the king of hell! The destruction of a soul for which Christ shed His precious blood on the cross!

Notwithstanding the greatness of the misfortune over which the angels in Heaven weep, no matter how difficult it is to repair the injury, yet conversion and reconciliation with God is always possible, as long as the sinner preserves his holy faith. Alas, this, too, is often undermined and destroyed by the false prophets in clothing of paper—irreligious books. Examine the innumerable books of science, books of travel, the romances, pamphlets and newspapers with which the world is flooded. What do you find in the great majority of them? Scurrilous jests and ridiculous jibes concerning those things which are dear and sacred to every Catholic heart.

The existence of God, the immortality of the soul, in fac , all the essential and important truths of religion are denied with bold effontery. Revealed religion is combated with sophistical arguments and ridiculed as imagination or as fables invented by the priests. Man is simply an educated animal, evolved in course of time from the ape or orangoutang. The greatest wisdom is expressed in the sentence, "Enjoy life as long as it is possible, for soon the spade of the grave-digger will cover up all there is of man." In order to steal faith from the heart, the most scandalous tales about popes, bishops, priests and religious are invented and repeated as historical truths. Now, I ask you: is it possible without a miracle of grace, to preserve your faith, if you seek food for your mind in such books that are filled with lies, calumnies and slanders? Is it possible to retain your respect for the Church? If you continue to sip this poison, in time you will become perverted, grow doubtful, and, at last, become an infidel, scorning and despising your holy faith.

Ah, who could count the number of unfortunates who by this means became perverts and apostates. If hell were opened before your eyes, and you could see the legions of the damned, you would hear from millions of tongues: On those vicious books that I read, were the murderers that destroyed my faith, my innocence; they robbed me of Heaven, and through them I lost eternal happiness. Oh, that I had been born blind, so as to escape this perversion! Could you but hear these cries and lamentations, these terrifying groans, the Church would not need, under severe penalties, to forbid you to read these irreligious books. You would cast them away; you would flee from them as from the most poisonous reptiles, and you would never venture to risk the price of your immortal soul for the vile pleasure of feeding your mind with these poisonous and filthy productions.

Hence, away with all bad books, away with infidel writings, away with all lascivious romances and immoral novels, no matter how fashionable they may be. Cast them into the fire; it is better that the paper burn, than that your soul perish in the flames of hell. Read good books. There is a sufficient number of classical and scientific works which will not assail your faith, which you can safely read, but alas! the good books remain in the shelves covered with dust. What a host of beautiful books may be procured! books that will increase your faith and encourage you to practice virtue. They are the prophets of God, who will assist you in saving your souls and lead you to Heaven. If you would frequently read some pious and religious books, as the lives of the saints, the great heroes of faith, and learn of the virtues they practised, the deeds they have done for the greater honor and glory of God, you would grow rapidly in faith, hope and love of God, in zeal for virtue and in that true piety which brings peace and consolation in life and consoling confidence death. Amen.

IMITATION OF CHRIST.

Of Inordinate Affections.

1. Whensoever a man desireth anything inordinately, he is presently disquieted with himself.

The proud and covetous are never easy.

The poor and humble of spirit live in much peace.

The man who is not yet perfectly dead to himself, is soon tempted and overcome by small and trifling things.

He who is weak in spirit, and in a manner yet carnal and inclined to sensible things, can hardly withdraw himself wholly from earthly desires.

And therefore he is often sad when he withdraweth himself from them, and is easily moved to anger if any one thwarteth him.

2. And if he hath pursued his inclinations, he is presently tormented with the guilt of his conscience; because he hath followed his passions, which help him not at all towards the peace he sought for.

It is, then, by resisting our passions that we are to find true peace of heart, and not by being slaves to them.

There is no peace therefore in the heart of a carnal man, nor in a man who is addicted to outward things, but only in a fervent spiritual man.

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In the Faubourg St. Marceau, one of the most squalid quarters in Paris, and which is justly called "Misery District," a priest prepared an old rag-picker for death. The dying man, admidst the dirt and degradation of his mean trade and the association of godless companions, had persistently clung to the Catholic faith, and would not close his abject career without receiving the last Sacraments.

But when the minister of God on his homeward way reflected on the filthy, forlorn condition of the sick man's tenement, and that he must convey his Divine Master thither, he became perplexed and troubled in his mind. Nor can this be wondered at for the room, which the dying man most correctly called his "den," was devoid of furniture.

Whilst the priest was plunged in his melancholy cogitation he approached a magnificent residence, and it suddenly occurred to him that a pious duchess owned it; the bearer of one of the most illustrious names in France, young, beautiful and in the best of health, and adored by her husband and all his relatives. He was aware that the fleeting pleasures of the world had still an attraction for her; at the same time he knew she had a good heart.

An irresistible impulse forced him to seek admittance to her presence and as he entered the stately mansion and trod the polished floors, the profusion of flowers, the costly carpets and hangings only too clearly reminded him of the difference between the fair and noble mistress of all this wealth and grandeur and the destitute, begrimed penitent.

Nevertheless, on being ushered in Her Grace's presence, he stated without hesitation his difficulty.

"Who, of course," she replied quite simply, "It would be utterly impossible to let our dear Saviour enter such a place."

"Then, as you share my opinion will you undertake that the room put in some sort of decent order for the administration of the Sacrament."

"Most gladly! I will see to it myself. Must I take my maid?"

"By all means for the room must be swept out and cleaned."

"Yes! but such work must be done voluntarily and cheerfully, and if a maid cleaned it she would deprive me of some of the merit. Now that I think of it, I will take my son. He is eight years old. It is also right that he should become acquainted with the misery of the poor."

"But, your Grace, the man is dangerously ill; there is no time to be lost. He is expecting me at 8 in the morning and his dwelling is a great distance from here. Can you possibly perform so much in the meantime?"

"Have no fear," she cheerfully replied "I shall be there long before you." Happily it was spring and the days broke early, and when on the following morning the priest arrived at 8 with the Viaticum, he found the rag-picker's den transformed into a clean and lovely habitation. It had voluntarily reminded him of the sepulchre which the piety of the faithful erect in each Catholic church on Maundy Thursday for the Blessed Sacrament. The entire chamber was draped in white and over the miserable pallet of rags was thrown a snow white embroidered coverlet. A table had been procured which was covered with a fine white damask cloth and bore a crucifix and two candles in silver with wax tapers; at the side was a vessel containing holy water and a consecrated sprig of boxwood, which had been forgotten.

The young duchess had just completed her labor of love when the priest entered; and had cast off her hat and wore a large white apron to protect her dress. But immediately at the sight of the Blessed Sacrament she and her little son dropped on their knees at the front of the bed and devoutly recited the Confiteor. The aged rag-picker lay on his clean bed, the picture of radiant contentment, more especially as Her Grace had carefully combed his hair, a circumstance of which he had certainly long been deprived.

When the priest leaning over him began in a few words to prepare him for a devout reception of the Holy Sacrament, the old man quickly interrupted him, exclaiming with a joyful glee, "The good lady kneeling there has told me all that. She and her little boy have been praying with me. I am so happy!"

He received his Saviour with feigned piety, and the priest had scarcely ended the prayer of thanksgiving when the duchess took the rag-picker's feeble horny old hand in hers and laid it gently on her little curly head, saying:

"Please, my good man, now that you have received Holy Communion and are our dear Lord's friend, bestow on us your blessing. It will certain to bring us great happiness."

"Oh! my lady," ejaculated the old rag picker, "a poor old man like me can give you no blessing. The good God Almighty must bless you, my lad. Aye, and he will, too; I'll bless you and your son!"

So speaking he wept, and down the cheeks of the priest there coursed the sweetest tears he ever shed. He it is who has narrated for us this beautiful incident and he has told it as an example of that true charity which, not content with the mere bestowal of alms, expends itself for the suffering neighbor.