

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.

CLIX.

I have shown how, everywhere on the continent, the Reformation was a movement of thoroughly persecuting violence, treating with the utmost disdain all claims of the Catholic Church, not merely to prevail, but even to exist. Innumerable possessions, general consent, established use, were dealt with, not as things against which new apprehensions of truth, carefully supported by Scripture and reasoning might be allowed to prevail for those who saw their way clear to accept them, but as things which were to be trampled under foot with absolute contumely, together with their adherents. The watchword of the Lutheran movement was: "Massacre the Pope and Cardinals, and if need be the Bishops." The watchword of the Calvinistic movement was: "Massacre all obstinate Papists whatever, without distinction of age, sex or condition." True, human nature was not found equal to such a height of exterminating cruelty, but these were the words of command given out by the leaders.

Hallam says that he thinks it could be shown that for the first century or more the number of advocates of a partial toleration was decidedly larger among the Catholics than among the Protestants. In Germany the Catholic Estates, having formally recognized Lutheranism, and ratified its expropriations of church endowments up to 1555, could not in return obtain any promise from the Lutherans of refraining from a continuance of their violent courses. "The Gospel will not be bound," was the motto of the refractory princes. A noble device, only that from them it meant: "The church foundations still remaining belong to Christ, and are now in the hands of Antichrist. Let us, promise or no promise to the contrary notwithstanding, stand firm on the devil's hands as fast and as far as we can. True most that we have already seized we have turned to our own use and to the use of our sons and daughters, of our wives and concubines, of the favored objects of our passions, natural and unnatural. We have given them over to the service of a boundless gluttony, of a boundless drunkenness, of a boundless ostentation. These signs of our emancipation from the constraints of the law we have carried to such a pitch that some of our own preachers begin to be frightened, and reproach us with having infected the very Papists with the contagion of our vices. What of that? Our only reveals are a privilege of our divine adoption. If the slaves of the Pope imitate them, they only sink a little deeper into hell, and what does that signify to us? Let us, like holy Belshazzars, make merry out of the cups and vessels of the Temple, for we are the true priests thereof. So shall we cause Lucifer to gnash his teeth, that, for all our wallowing in the sensual style, he can not come at us fortified as we are behind the impregnable barrier of our Lutheran faith. Away with these evangelists! Jesuits who would bring back the yoke and bind us down again to a superfluous care of holiness and continence."

It is too true, the Jesuits did first apply themselves, with fatal success, to the care of persuading the half-Lutheranized Catholics of Bavaria and Austria that godly living is of vital importance to a Christian who would be saved, not a mere luxury to be suspiciously allowed to the extra-decent. No wonder, then, that the Society became the object of so implacable a resentment on the part of the genuine Lutherans, who thus saw the melancholical influence in favor of holy living reinforced by the Jesuit influence which had begun to spread among the Protestants in consequence of the Jesuit scholarship. Many younger Lutherans had been educated by the Jesuits, and though remaining Protestant, had a great reverence for their teachers' good example, which made them suspicious of the original Lutheran doctrine of justification.

The Thirty Years' War, although opening with the Bohemian troubles of 1618, was, as we know, precipitated upon Germany proper by the imperial edict requiring the Evangelicals to give back all the church estates seized by them since the Peace of Passau in 1555. Of course it was impossible to expect that the spoils of seventy years would be freely surrendered by the reformed. Yet whom had they chiefly to blame for the edict? Almost down to 1600 the Catholic estates had again and again made overtures to the Lutherans, offering to confirm even their later alienations, provided they would allow this new treaty to be a final bar to encroachments. The Catholic overtures had been firmly rejected. The Protestants reply was virtually this: "There is very much yet to be got, and, whatever the risk of refusing, we will not let our hands against future possibilities." It is not very strange then, if the Catholics, convinced at last that nothing was to be gained by peace, should have finally made up their minds to war. Had they been permanently victorious, it is not to be supposed that they would have stopped short at the Peace of Passau. They would doubtless have swept back to the very beginning, and reclaimed every acre of alienated church lands, until at last German Protestantism would have collapsed from lack of the means of life.

Resistance to the edict of restitution, therefore, was at length a vital necessity of German Protestantism, and the

great Swedish King can not be blamed for finally coming to the aid of his Lutheran brethren. Yet had the Evangelicals observed the Peace of Nuremberg, or had they even made a treaty on the widely extended terms offered by the Catholics about 1590, there would have been no edict of restitution to oppose, and no need of any foreign intervention.

I do not pretend that I am deeply read in the literature of the Thirty Years' War. Nor do I make my presentment as final. Yet having read Janssen's careful details on the one hand, and having read Ranke, Schiller and Gardiner on the other, I can not find that the charges of the Catholic writer are materially contradicted (though naturally they are not emphasized) by the three Protestant historians. The war—the history of which, thus far, says Professor Gardiner, is rather a legend—may at present be not unfavourably described as having largely sprung out of the obstinate determination of the Lutherans, sometimes not to make compacts, sometimes not to keep them when made. "No faith to be kept with Papists" would not be a very bad rubric for the transaction of German Evangelicals from 1560 to 1620.

There is of course no doubt that the Jesuits had a great deal to do with rousing the Thirty Years' War. Without them there would hardly have been any war. There would hardly have been any Catholics left in Germany to contend with the Protestants. Their efforts revived South German Catholicism, purged it of unassimilable Lutheran elements, raised the standard of morality and of religious fervor, renewed the continuity of German Catholicism with Italy and Spain, and thus gave it a sense of its own strength, besides recovering to it, through spontaneous adhesion, a great number of the younger Protestants or semi-Protestants.

It could not be expected, therefore, that German Catholicity, thus recovered to a sense of its reviving strength, should not begin to make use of it. If the German Catholics had any rights, of course they were warranted to contend for them. The Jesuits seem to have had little share in the ensuing conflicts except that of the man who, having recovered to health a vigorous champion, is so far, and no farther, responsible for his subsequent combats.

When the final compromise of 1648 came, in the Peace of Westphalia, although this was predominantly favorable to the Protestants, the Jesuits gave their counsel that the terms agreed upon must be faithfully observed, as they have been observed to this day, except that the spiritual principalities were shattered by the French Revolution.

CHARLES C. STARBUCK.

Andover, Mass.

RELIGION THE SOCIAL REMEDY.

There is a masterly analysis of the latest encyclical of the Holy Father, on Christian Democracy, in the Catholic World Magazine for June. The hollowing of the many schemes that have been submitted for social betterment is becoming evident, and the thinking people are settling down to the fact that there is but one great remedy, and that is the remedy that can come only through a wider diffusion of the spirit of religion.

"All reform is four-square. Society cannot be lifted up by a basic corner fulcrum." It must be a reform. In words more apt, the Holy declares they must apply themselves with undiminished ardor to the perfection of the spirit. The priest's field is the whole social world. By example and precept he must induce the people to cultivate peace, to avoid rabbles and to strive, to do justice willingly, to love domestic life, and above all to practice religion, in emulation of the priestly model, the Holy Family of Nazareth. The priest must urge the business man to do business in true, high, and incorruptible principles; from the stock holder he must demand his vote, voice, and influence for the inalienable rights of his humblest employee; he must insist that the public officers stand unflinchingly for public righteousness, and against all commerce with the devil in approving or licensing iniquity for public or private revenue; he must convince judge, lawyer, teacher, and legislator that he is under vows to savor with Christian grace every secular function he may be called upon to discharge. In a word, the priest by his very position is fitted and should reach the remotest muscle and nerve of the body politic and the body social. This vast body should be a united power for God and the Church. The priest, as a skilled pilot, should guide them safely through the dangerous channel, by the Charybdis of false hatred, by the Scylla of forbidden and heretical organization, into the safe and peaceful harbor of Mother Church."

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DISTRUST OF SELF.

"Jesus spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous."

My brethren, Holy Church, in bidding us study these words of our Lord, would urge on our attention that we are redeemed by the Most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and not by any merits of our own. She does this that we may bear in mind, in this season of relaxation, that we need to be redeemed, and that without the merits of our Lord we should be one and all a lost race. "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me," says our Saviour by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah. There is no possibility of winning heaven except by the merits of Christ. Adam's fatal sin so infected us with its miserable poison that all human remedies were and are totally worthless to cure us. Of course we need not exaggerate, as the Calvinists do, the depravity of fallen man. We are not by nature totally depraved. The corruption of the fall is miserable enough; but it has not utterly extinguished natural virtue in man, nor has it made his every action a sin, as our Presbyterian friends once believed, and as some of them still profess to believe.

But when you ask, How is man to enjoy the happiness of heaven? the doctrine of the Catholic Church infallibly teaches the answer: Only by acquiring the merits of Christ. To trust in your own righteousness, when there is question of getting to heaven, is to rob the Son of God of His office of Redeemer and the Holy Ghost of the office of Sanctifier. Hence the Council of Trent defined as an article of faith: If any one shall say that a man can believe, or hope, or love, or repent in such manner that he shall be justified without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit going beforehand, let him be anathema. And there is no Christian doctrine more plainly taught in Holy Scripture, or more plainly essential to the office of Christ, than that His merits are necessary to salvation.

But, brethren, if this is a cause of humility to us as men, it is a cause of wonderful joy to us as Christians. For by the grace of Christ we are made children of God, and are really sanctified with that holiness which the Son of God our Redeemer had and yet has—yes, really, and not technically, or figuratively, or in name, but actually imbued with that infinite love of His Father which made our Lord's lightest sigh of more worth to purchase heaven than all the virtues of all the best and purest of the human race put together. What the Son of God is by nature that we are by grace children of the Eternal Father, united to the God head by the bond of the Holy Spirit. When we receive the grace of baptism, especially when we receive Communion, we become united to God by a union so perfect that St. John says we are entitled to be called, we actually are, Sons of God. Our Lord is called by St. Paul (Rom. viii. 29) "the first born among many brethren." And what did our Saviour Himself say when He bade His disciples farewell? "I ascend to my Father and to your Father."

Now, my brethren, if there are many who need to be warned against pride by the example of the haughty Pharisees, there are some who, like the poor publican, need to be encouraged. There is a true sense in which a good Christian may say, I am a righteous man; it is that sense in which St. Paul spoke when he said, "By the grace of God I am what I am." As much as to say, My virtue, if I have got any, is none the less mine because I have received it from Jesus Christ, and because by His love I still persevere and hope to persevere to the end in it. Nay, my virtue is all the more to be boasted of, if I give credit to whom credit is due.

Let us then, be indwelt humbly when we look at the shriveled nakedness of our own poor, fallen nature; but let us rejoice and be honestly proud when we consider how God changes us into princes of His heavenly kingdom. Oh! how we ought to value the means of acquiring divine grace—the practice of humble, fervent prayer, the sorrowful confession of sin, and especially the devout reception of Holy Communion; for these are the great and necessary means of acquiring Christian righteousness.

Those key-hole Catholics that get the little religion they have by hanging around church doors on Sunday mornings rarely amount to much. Always the last in and the first out, they often regard the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass as an ordeal to be avoided, if they would get up nearer to the altar and the priest, the experiment might reveal beauties in our divine faith that they have little dreamed of. Move up, gentlemen, and take your religion at short range.—Now World.

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