

PROTESTANT CONTROVERSY.

BY A PROTESTANT MINISTER.

XXXVII.

My Methodist friend, who has signified to me his agreement with Doctor Sheldon's contention, that Luther was guilty of no moral obliquity in sanctioning, very reluctantly, the bigamy of the Landgrave Philip, founds his defence of the Reformer chiefly on two positions. One is, that Luther teaches, in general, a stricter doctrine of marriage than the Catholic divines. The other is, that he is at least as strict as they in maintaining that a marriage otherwise void may be validated by a dispensation.

Let us examine each of these positions. And first, it is true that Luther teaches a stricter doctrine of marriage than the Catholic divines? That certainly is not his own opinion. In the marriage code which he issued, not formally but explicitly, in 1523, he designates the "impediment of crime" and the "impediment of public honesty" as "barriers to Christian freedom brought in by mere folly, nay, by implicity." Now what are these two impediments?

The impediment of crime arises when, between a man and woman who have been criminally intimate, but are restrained from marriage because one at least is married already, there passes a mutual promise of marriage in the event of widowhood. Such baseness the Church punishes by declaring such subsequent marriage null.

Another form is this. One, say the woman, is married, the other free. Without a formal promise, or, it may be with one, the married woman procures the death of her husband and then marries the adulterer. He may know of the murder or may not. In either case the Church annuls such a marriage.

Now one would think that in setting up this impediment the Church was rendering a signal service to morality, and building up a strong barrier against heinous crime. Not at all, says Luther. The adulterer ought to be stoned, unquestionably, but as this is not now customary, she is not to be barred her Christian liberty of receiving a promise of future marriage from the adulterer. Of course Luther does not say all this right out, but it all lies in his contemptuous abrogation of this impediment. If then her husband, like a friendly, good-natured gentleman, dies "a fair strated death" comfortably in his bed, it is her evangelical privilege, as a woman justified by faith alone, without any popish regard to works, to bury her complainant spouse with a grateful remembrance of his kindness in taking himself so opportunely out of the way; and then, in all the fresh witchery of her widow's weeds, to call on her former partner of wickedness to fulfil the overlapping betrothal, and make an honest woman of her once more. If, however, her husband is too dull to sense the situation, and, regardless of the expectancy of fond hearts, will "persist in living," as Suetonius says of certain unaccommodating dowagers and rich bachelor uncles, so that she is fain to assist nature by a little composing draught, then, says Luther, she certainly deserves to be hanged, but if she goes free of the material noose, let the poor thing by all means enjoy the sweet comfort of encircling herself once more with the matrimonial freedom good for it, if it can not win adherents by a little connivance, on occasion, with bigamy, or trigamy, or adultery, or lying, or concubinage, or other infamies of our fallen nature? As he says to Melancthon, we must not concern ourselves too much about being holy here. We should leave such things to the next world. Faith here; holiness hereafter. It is only these blinded Papists that insist so stiffly on our conjoining the two. When first Olander began to teach, Faith justifies because it leads to holiness, the whole Lutheran world paled with horror. Even Olander's notorious drunkenness, and foul-mouthed blasphemies, when drunk against the holiest things, could not save his reputation for orthodoxy. To rescue his body from the possibility of being cast out on the dunghill, his friends, at his death, had to bury him in secret. (Hartknoch 354. Hase 129.)

To accuse Luther, therefore, of being stricter than the Catholics in his law of marriage, is to do him cruel injustice. Olander himself was not charged with any such infringement on evangelical freedom. No; neither previous adultery, nor previous murder of a husband or wife, ought to be any restraints, thinks Luther, on the liberty of intermarriage among the murderers and adulterers.

As he is against all "foolish and impious rigor," as he calls it, even in these cases of adultery and murder, I need not say that the less obviously necessary "impediment of public honesty" is treated by him with unbounded contempt. This voids a marriage in which one of the parties is already married, but has never lived with the first husband or wife. It also voids a marriage in which one of the parties has already been betrothed to a very near relative of the other and has not been released by mutual consent. Now the expediency of this second limitation is in my view exceedingly doubtful. A great proportion of the entangled marriage cases of early and later times have been bound up with it. Assuredly, however, it is neither impious nor foolish.

Of all absurdities, the greatest is, to call Luther strict in his interpretation of marriage. His conceptions of the relations of the sexes are coarse and

CONTRIBUTING TO THE CHURCH.

INSTRUCTION BY REV. S. M. LYONS.

Appealing for money is distasteful to priests and yet they are not infrequently compelled to resort to this method of securing the funds necessary to meet the needs of the Church. The Church, rectory and parish school expenses met, interest and debt paid and the pastor supported. The welfare of souls, the preservation of social order, the happiness of the family, the virtue of society, the stability and perpetuity of the Government, all depend on the thorough teaching and actualizing influence of religion. Therefore, when the pastor appeals for contributions to meet the requirements of the Church it is not for himself, but for the general good and honor of his people that he pleads. All will concede that men who at great sacrifice have prepared them and in his first fruits. And you are cursed with want, and you afflict Me, even the whole nation of you." (Malachi iii., 8, 9.) Our Lord promises "blessings unto abundance" to those who contribute honestly as commanded. "Bring all the tithes unto the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and try Me in this, saith the Lord; if I open not unto you the floodgates of heaven and pour you out a blessing, ever so abundantly." (Malachi iii., 10.) How beautiful the words of holy David on the generous offerings of the people for the building of the temple of Jerusalem: "All things are Thine, and we have only given Thee what we have received at Thy hand." (I. Paralipomenon xxix., 14.) Were all nowadays imbued with those grand sentiments which attribute all temporal blessings to a kind Providence and cheerfully acknowledge His right to a reasonable share of their income for the support of religion, the building and maintenance of our churches and schools would cease to be a source of worryment to pastors.

Offerings according to one's means, made with a good heart to God, will assuredly bring down blessings on the contributors. "Give to the Most High according to what He hath given to thee, and with a good eye do according to the ability of thy hands. For the offices. Storekeepers want their bills paid promptly, landlords their rents, laborers their wages, clerks their salaries, money lenders their interest, the city and State their taxes. No one can retain honor and credit who culpably fails to meet his just obligations. The influence of the Church makes for honesty in business transactions, for the faithful payment of just debts, the maintenance of social order, the support of legitimate civil authority. Yet there are those who complain and criticize when the pastor insists on sound business methods in church affairs and pleads for the prompt payment of dues for the maintenance of religion. When you find people who are trying to travel to heaven at their neighbors' expense, who give little or nothing towards the support of religion in their parish, you are sure to find ones who are loud-mouthed in their denunciations of their pastor's appeals for money to supply the needs which have been created. On the way home from church, at the family dinner table, at evening gatherings such ones may be heard condemning appeals for money in church, censuring the management of the parish, finding fault with the music, the sermon, etc. The tendency of their unreasoning, censorious scoldings is to weaken and undermine religious faith, lessen reverence for the priesthood and destroy regard or authority in general. It is because such ones do not contribute their share to maintain their parish Church that the pastor is compelled to plead for money. People that pay nothing to the Church have no right to criticize the methods of procuring support. These self-appointed critics and chronic grumblers can dress well, give parties, attend the theatre, travel here and there and, in a word, have money for everything except the Church. Some young people spend more money in a single evening than they give the Church in a whole year. They have money for cigars, drink, operas, picnics, excursions, balls, etc., but when the plate goes round on Sundays a penny is rummaged out from the silver and bills in their pocket book for the Lord. When a special collection is announced the professional Christianities of those non-contributing members of the parish is awfully shocked. To delude others into believing that they are heavy contributors they are loud-mouthed in making irreverent comments. "They are always taking up collections." "You hear nothing but money in church," such ones say. It is of such ones that make special appeals for aid necessary. Did those ones contribute even a reasonable share of the tithes demanded by God for the direct support of His Church, priests would be making the very painful necessity of saving special appeals. A tithe of the money spent foolishly for dinners, theatres, parties, traveling, games, cigars, etc., would supply the imperative needs of church and school. If those sordid grumblers did but see their base, selfish treatment of the Church as sensible people see it, they would doubtless grow ashamed of continuing to mean and low that no society would suffer it.

Leaving aside the divine command to support religion, a proper sense of honor and justice would surely induce such ones to bear their share of the burden of maintaining their parish church. Self-respect, regard for honesty and decency should convince

those non-paying critics of their wrong-doing in inflicting a double burden on the generous, self-sacrificing and devoted members of the congregation. They want the ministrations of the pastor, the use and the honors of the Church and the privilege of sitting in judgment on the management of the parish, but arrogantly refuse to assist their fellow members in meeting the expenses. The Old Testament commanded tithes, one-tenth of all income, to be given to the priesthood. "Tithes of the land, whether of corn or of the trees, are the Lord's and are sanctified to Him." (Leviticus xxvii., 30.) God observed those who withheld tithes from the Levites and charged them with afflicting Him. "And I perceived that the portion of the Levites had not been given them." (II. Esdra xiii., 10.) "Shall a man afflict God, for you afflict Me? And you have said: 'Wherein do we afflict Thee?' In tithes and in first fruits. And you are cursed with want, and you afflict Me, even the whole nation of you." (Malachi iii., 8, 9.) Our Lord promises "blessings unto abundance" to those who contribute honestly as commanded. "Bring all the tithes unto the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and try Me in this, saith the Lord; if I open not unto you the floodgates of heaven and pour you out a blessing, ever so abundantly." (Malachi iii., 10.) How beautiful the words of holy David on the generous offerings of the people for the building of the temple of Jerusalem: "All things are Thine, and we have only given Thee what we have received at Thy hand." (I. Paralipomenon xxix., 14.) Were all nowadays imbued with those grand sentiments which attribute all temporal blessings to a kind Providence and cheerfully acknowledge His right to a reasonable share of their income for the support of religion, the building and maintenance of our churches and schools would cease to be a source of worryment to pastors.

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HARD ON LUTHER.

Hard things were said of Martin Luther by Protestants themselves on the occasion of the celebration of his quinquagesimal. The most scholarly journal in England, we remember, spoke of him as a monster, and referred to his reformation as a myth. The Rev. Martin has not stood the test of historical investigation; and now there are many unprejudiced non-Catholics who see in the Father of Protestantism only an ex-priest, of uncommon ability, it is true, but one having all the vices common to his kind. The Rev. Charles C. Starbuck, writing in the Sacred Heart Review, in reply to Dr. Sheldon, of Boston University, says that neither purity nor scrupulousness nor veracity was part of Luther's character:

In his conflict with Rome he deliberately emancipated himself from all obligations of morality. . . . To talk of moral strictness in any direction, but above all in that which concerns the relations of the sexes, as being any part of his character, seems to be getting up an altogether fictitious Luther. Melancthon, scornfully says of him (see Janssen II., 339): "These run-away nuns had their hands full with their schemes for capturing him. Now that he has fallen into the trap at last, let us hope that it will make a more reputable man of him." The truth is, for good or evil he shattered the fabric of the Latin Church in Northern Europe with a vast Antinomian explosion, of mingled religiosity and sensuality. Comparing him to a think a good deal of Henry Ward Beecher. We may admire or abhor his work, and we may well allow that only great naturals can do vast things. Even the Catholics might say:

"Let the devil be sometime honored for his burning throne." To talk about moral rectitude or moral obliquity, however, in connection with him, seems a good deal like inquiring into the moral rectitude or obliquity of a typhoon or an earthquake.

However, as it appears that Doctor Sheldon insists on the question of Dispensations, we will consider that next. Charles C. Starbuck. Andover, Mass.

In our childish days we recanted being sent to school, and being made to work when we got there. We were willing enough to forego the advantages of a liberal education. But our parents and teachers knew our true interest better, and insisted on making men of us even in spite of ourselves. Our Father in heaven insists on making us saints, uncanonized probably and uncanonizable, but still saints. There are none in heaven who are not of the number of All Saints.—Joseph Rickaby, S. J.

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FIVE-MINUTES' SERMON. Third Sunday after Pentecost. CONVERSION OF SINNERS. "I say to you that even so there shall be joy in Heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance." (Luke 15, 7.) In this day's gospel, our Divine Saviour shows Himself under the figure of the Good Shepherd, who leaves the ninety-nine sheep in security and seeks the lost one to bring it back to the fold. By this act He proclaims not only the infinite mercy of God, towards sinners, but His divine example which requires us, go and do likewise; be a good shepherd to your brother, and save his soul from eternal perdition. Verily, my dear Christians, there can be no more sublime, no holier work, nor one more pleasing to God than that which is mentioned as the first of the spiritual works of mercy. To admonish sinners? Can we do a more charitable act, one more beneficial to our neighbor, and more meritorious for ourselves, than to save our neighbor's soul from perdition, and bring it back to God? How easy has not Almighty God made the practice of this great work of mercy? To assist the poor, riches are required, to go to the heathen and to preach the gospel, one must have a priest. To recall the sinner from his evil ways, however, requires neither riches nor sacerdotal dignity: all that is necessary is a sincere love for God and one's neighbor. This love will teach you the best manner of approaching your erring brother, will give you the words that will best appeal to his heart, will give you perseverance, again and again to treat him to save his soul by true penance. It is by such words of love that our Divine Saviour, that the apostles and all the zealous missionaries have achieved their greatest triumphs of conversions. And it is by such words of love and compassion that you, although not priests, can be missionaries, can save souls for Heaven, can become the greatest benefactors of your neighbor. On your part, it is only required that you are willing to be used as an instrument of God's infinite mercy. Do not, however, forget that besides the sermon of words, there is also a sermon of example. Where the example and the words do not coincide the best admonitions produce no more beneficial effects than to cast sand into the air, or to pour water into defective vessels. If your erring brother sees you doing the things which you so kindly admonish him to perform, then only does he feel the full force of your words; then only will he be convinced of the truth of counsels and the sincerity of your advice. Your virtuous example becomes a continued sermon, and one which will impress him most powerfully and attract him to imitation. Hence, my dear brethren, let the light of your good works, of your virtuous lives shine forth that the sinner may see it, be edified and induced to follow it. If there is question of giving admonitions and instructions, one or the other might excuse himself for want of experience, but no one can excuse himself from giving good example: God demands this of all for many reasons, one of which is that it is to be a means for the conversion of sinners. There is, moreover, a third requisite to accomplish the work of converting the sinner. We must not only admonish him with love and patience, nor only edify him by good example, we must also pray for him and beseech God to have mercy on him. Human efforts alone will not suffice to open the eyes of the sinner, and move his heart to contrition: this can be done only by the grace of God. "I have planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the increase," says St. Paul. (I. Cor. 3, 6.) Hence we must, above all things, pray often and fervently for the conversion of sinners. Prayer is a weapon which the hardest hearts cannot always resist. The prayers and tears of St. Monica brought about the change of heart in the sinner Augustine and converted him into St. Augustine, a doctor of the Church. Such miracles of grace which are even greater than the creation of the world, are effected even now by prayer when it rises fervently to Heaven from a pure, pious and Christian heart. You know now, my dear Christian, how you can assist in bringing back the lost sheep to the fold. You must patiently and perseveringly labor with word, prayer and example. If you have not undertaken the good work resolve to begin to-day. If you are successful in saving but one soul for Heaven, you have conferred a benefit on your brother greater than that which can be imagined; you have given joy to Heaven beyond your conception, for you have saved a soul which is more precious than the whole creation, and the angels will rejoice in Heaven "Upon one sinner that doth penance more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance." Moreover, you will receive the everlasting gratitude of the one you have saved and the glorious reward awaiting you in the next world, will be an infinite recompense for what you have done for the love of God. But even if your persevering effort are useless, if all your fervent prayer cannot soften the hard heart of an erring brother, be not disheartened, think not that your labor of love was in vain, for God looks not only to the deed, rewards not only according to the work you accomplish. He regards the intention, and will therefore give you the same reward as if you had succeeded in bringing back the lost sheep to the fold, in saving the soul of your erring brother. Amen.

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