

HERESY TRIALS.

UNDER this head the *Protestant Churchman* says:—

"Do heresy trials secure soundness in the faith? Do they conserve truth? We question it, and are inclined to believe that, by the prominence they give to the supposed heretics, and the infinitely increased circulation of the obnoxious opinions, they multiply the evil opposed. They used to burn heretics; but we doubt if such heroic treatment deterred others from holding the heretical opinions, &c."

The above, with variations, is often met and sounds plausible, but there are some points, of which this method of reasoning entirely fails to take account, viz:—

1. Burning, and all other kinds of pains and penalties for so called heresy, denied to men liberty of opinion. The arm of the law took hold and said,—recant or die. All that the poor victim wished was liberty to worship God according to his conscience, but cruel intolerance would not give that liberty.

2. The so-called heresy trials of to-day are simply on this wise. A number of men, professing to believe certain principles and doctrines, band together as a branch of the Church, and believing the doctrines which they hold, to be for the good of mankind, they do what they can to spread them abroad.

In course of time some one of these members begins to teach what is thought to be at variance with the principles of that Church. The other members of it examine into his teachings, and say to him, these are not the principles upon which we banded together. You are welcome to teach them, but we believe them to be wrong, and hurtful instead of helpful, to man, and we do not wish you to teach them in our name. We do not wish, as members making up that Church, to be responsible for them and for the evil we believe they will do. Teach them as widely as you like but do not inflict upon us the penalty of making us responsible as a church for what we believe to be false and harmful.

If he will persist in doing so, the only thing they can do, if they wish to escape all responsibility for his teachings, is to withdraw themselves from him and leave him alone to teach what he may choose. There is no interference with his liberty of opinion; no restraint upon his liberty of teaching, they decline to lend their name to that teaching. They give the utmost freedom but demand freedom from responsibility for themselves as well.

As to the question whether such "trials" do not do more harm than otherwise, by giving wider publicity to error; if the so called "heresy," be truth, there can be no harm done. In that case the more widely it is heralded the better, and the sooner will the Church have its eyes opened to the error of its ways, or if it persist in

keeping them closed, it will dwindle and decay, while outside of it another and grander church, holding different principles will arise upon its ruins.

If however the so-called "heresy" be untrue, then, while for a time it may seem to be made more prominent, it will be in the end but to make the truth more prominent in its defeat, and leave men more intelligently grounded in that truth.

Where truth and error meet together, truth must triumph, and the more widely and publicly they meet, the greater in the end is the triumph of the truth.

The thing most to be dreaded in the religious life, whether of individuals or churches, is not the publication of error but stagnation. The running stream soon purifies itself, while the stagnant pool breeds disease and death.

PROF. CAMPBELL'S CASE.

AND SOME NOTES ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

ON Sabbath afternoon, the twenty-sixth or February, Rev. Prof. Campbell of the Presbyterian College, Montreal, delivered a lecture to the students of Queen's University, Kingston, entitled, "The Perfect Book or The Perfect Father."

The lecture was published. It was claimed by many to be gravely erroneous. The Presbytery of Montreal took it up for consideration. They appointed a committee to have a friendly conference with Prof. Campbell, and, results not being to their satisfaction, it was resolved to proceed regularly by libel.

This document consisted of two "counts," or sections, as follows, viz., that in the said lecture he holds and teaches:—

1. A view of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, which impugns and discredits them as the supreme and infallible source of religious truth, and:—

2. A view of God which sets Him forth as one who does not smite, either in the way of punishment or discipline, and who has nothing to do with the punishing or judging of the wicked.

A copy of this libel was served upon Prof. Campbell, and he was cited to appear before the Presbytery on the 12th September. On that and the following day, the case was carefully considered. The Professor was heard, and after long and careful deliberation, the first count of the libel was found proven by a vote of twenty-one to thirteen, and the second by twenty-seven to two.

Prof. Campbell then appealed to the Synod of Montreal and Ottawa, which meets next May at Carleton Place.