

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.

CLXXIII.

Among the doctrines which the Champion declares that all Protestants reject as false, I seem to have passed over (5) the Pope's infallibility. Of course there is no dispute here, since the Pope's doctrinal infallibility, speaking *ex cathedra*, includes the definition that all Christians ought to be subject to the Pope's jurisdiction in spiritual matters.

I have already handled (6) the authority of Tradition. Here again we see the blundering ignorance and vagueness of these vulgar controversialists. Why do these men presume to teach the people of a Roman Catholic country what they themselves do not know? If they had said that Protestants invariably refuse to make auricular confession compulsory, they would have told the truth. Those ministers of the Church of England who insist upon it are not Protestants, and abhor the very name. So also if they had said that all Protestants regard the abolition of a minister as only declaratory, they would perhaps be in the right, although the Church of England, which encourages auricular confession in *extremis*, leaves this point untouched. She authorized the priest to say: "I absolve thee of all thy sins, etc."

Among the Lutherans, auricular confession subsisted for a number of generations, especially at the courts of princes. You often see it said of an eminent Lutheran clergyman of the past: "He was for many years confessor to King this, or Duke that, or Prince the other." I have seen the statement that the confessors of Lutheran sovereigns were often as influential at court as those of Catholic princes. Sometimes, indeed, more so, for it is said that the great Empress-Queen Maria Theresa, though a devoted daughter of the Church, would never suffer her confessor to meddle in affairs of state.

Peterson, brother of the first Lutheran Archbishop of Upsala, although a still stiffer Lutheran than the Archbishop, pleaded, when charged with having concealed a plot against the life of Gustavus Vasa, that he was bound by the seal of confession. The plea was not received, but his use of it shows that the most thoroughgoing Lutheranism not only admitted auricular confession, but its specific obligations. The practice has become nearly extinct, and Mochler says that the underlying principles of Protestantism are really inconsistent with its permanence. Yet Lutheranism has never consented to be forbidden it. Lutheranism, if told by these editors that no Protestant insists on auricular confession, would agree; but when told that every Protestant rejects the confessional, they would answer: "Speak for yourselves, gentlemen."

Returning to England, we find habitual auricular confession not uncommon among uneducated Protestants until at least the end of the seventeenth century. Archbishop Whitgift, a very strenuous, indeed, a persecuting Calvinist, is supposed to have been Queen Elizabeth's confessor. A century later, the saintly Bishop Ken, a High-Churchman, indeed, and an ardent Protestant, who appears even to have communicated with the Presbyterian Huguenots, is supposed to have been confessor to that staunch Protestant, and patroness of the Low-Churchmen Whig, Lady Russell.

It is not true, then, that all Protestants agree in rejecting the confessional. All that can be said is (which is doubtless very important) that they agree in rejecting *obligatory* confession.

(8) The doctrine of Purgatory. It is wholly unwarranted to say that all Protestants disbelieve in Purgatory, especially now.

First, what is the doctrine of Purgatory? I will warrant that these editors could not tell for their lives. It is as good as certain that they would heap up all the rude fantasies of the Middle Ages as included in it, although, as the learned Recollet Chrissmann remarks, neither the place, form, nor duration of purgatorial discipline is a matter of faith. How widely different Dante's portrait of Purgatory is from that common even with great theologians! Yet, as Wetzler and Welter remark, the Church has never found fault with one word of the "Divina Commedia." Even the Spanish Inquisition, which did strike out twenty lines from every copy that came under its censorious eye, found no fault with it doctrinally. It merely accused these lines of being disrespectful to the Pope and Cardinals, although the Pope and Cardinals had never found fault with them. It may have wished to make up for its own perpetual and arrogant disobedience to the Holy See by an official zeal for the honor of Rome where she had not discovered herself to be affronted.

The Tablet remarks that Dante lays great stress on the purifying side of Purgatory (which, indeed, is alone expressed in its name), but that he says little about the penal aspect of the doctrine, although from time to time he implies it. His delineation of Purgatory, therefore, though decidedly divergent from the aspect of the doctrine prevalent in the Church, in no way contradicts it. There is simply varying emphasis, no denial.

All that the Council of Trent says is, that the Church has always taught "that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls detained there are aided by the suffrages of the faithful, and chiefly by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar." Now there are a great many Protestants, and their number is continually increasing, who hold and teach, if not from the pulpit, yet in writing and conversation, that there is a state of purgatorial discipline hereafter, that the souls detained in it are aided by the suffrages of the faithful. Many would not hesitate to add, "and by the eucharistic memorial of the altar." As a young Congregational clergyman lately said to me: "How

ridiculous it is to teach with the Westminster Confession that all the souls of the elect are at death immediately received into glory!"

This Protestant view is certainly not the Roman Catholic, for it holds the first state of most departed Christians to be disciplinary, but does not regard it as properly penal. It is, however, a true doctrine of Purgatory. It agrees with the Catholic in denying that the whole body of the elect are, at death "immediately received into glory," as the Presbyterian Confession teaches. Lutheranism, as I understand, has always the matter open to private opinion. I have seen an occasional prayer for the dead in Lutheran prayer-books, although I think such a prayer is seldom if ever used in Church services.

Richard Rothe is not only implacably antagonistic to the Church of Rome, but he expects the Church in every form to merge finally into the Christian State. He, therefore, is certainly a Protestant of the Protestants. Yet in his "Theologische Ethik," a work of extraordinary depth and self-consistent erudition, he develops in detail his doctrine of the essential necessity, for most redeemed souls, of a state of purifying discipline. This he treats as involving material, or quasi-material remedies, and more or less of fire. He holds that with many souls perfect heavenly bliss is not attained for a long time, and is not attained until the end of the world. This disciplinary state he calls simply Purgatory, in German *Fegefeuer*, literally, cleansing fire.

Rothe has few out-and-out disciples (the present writer is probably as one of these), but he has profoundly influenced German and general Protestant thought. The illustrious Dornier calls him *delicieux Germane gentis*, ("the delight of the German race.") The zealous Protestant Joseph Cook extols him. How ridiculous then for these ignoramuses in Spanish American to tell their disciples there that "all Protestants agree in rejecting the doctrine of Purgatory!"

CHAS. C. STARBUCK.
Andover, Mass.

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Third Sunday after Epiphany.
PRIDE.

The advice given by St. Paul to the Christians who lived in Rome eighteen hundred years ago, "Be not wise in your own conceits," well deserves the attention of those who are living in our own days. Great progress has indeed been made in many things, but our greatest admirers will surely say that we are remarkable for having too low an opinion of ourselves—that we have grown in modesty and humility. In fact, I do not think I should be very far wrong if I said that, however much men differ in other respects, every one has a very good opinion of himself, places himself before every one else, is, in short, exceedingly wise in his own conceits, and that this is one of the most striking characteristics of our times.

Look at our young men. Consider the want of respect and even decent regard so many show to those older than themselves. "Old age is a crown of dignity," Holy Scripture tells us. It is true that this is made conditional upon its being found "in the ways of justice." But now whether it is found in the ways of justice or not, and too often because it is not found in the ways of justice, old age is far from being looked upon as a crown of dignity; it is rather made the target and mark for derision, ridicule, and even contempt, and advice and counsel are often rejected and despised simply because they are given by the more aged and experienced.

Consider, too, the manner in which parents are so often treated by their children. I do not refer to those sons and daughters specially who are utterly bad and depraved, those who, by their vicious lives and their cruel treatment, are bringing the gay hairs of their parents in sorrow to the grave, but I refer to those who may be looked upon as fairly good and virtuous. How little respect even these fairly good children show their parents! In their way of speaking to them, how imperious and dictatorial they often are, and if not that, how rude and uncivil it would seem from their ways of acting, as if the Lord had commanded the parents to honor the children, and not the children the parents. And as to obeying them, they scarcely think of such a thing. Does not such conduct as this—conduct diametrically opposed to the teaching of Holy Scripture and of the Church—spring from that being wise which is condemned by the Apostles?

But why does the Apostle condemn this false wisdom, and why does he teach us, on the contrary, to aim at the attainment of humility and lowliness of mind? It would take too long fully to answer this question; but to give a sufficient answer is quite easy. If the faults of which I have been speaking were the only evil effects which spring from self-conceit, it would be enough to justify its condemnation and to render it hateful and odious. But there is a more fatal consequence to which it may lead. "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent (that is to say, from the wise and prudent in their own conceits), and hast revealed them to the little ones. Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thine eyes." These are the words of our Lord Himself, and they show clearly the awful consequences of pride. They show us that it was pride which blinded the eyes of the Jews of old to that divine message of truth and love which our Lord came in order to bring them, and which, by blinding them, closed to them the way of salvation. And as it has closed to them, so it will also to us if we should fall into this dangerous self-conceit. Strive, then, my brethren, after true humility of heart, that you may not be cut off from the grace of God, which is given only to the humble.

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THE OBSTACLES TO CONVERSION.

The conversion of a soul from sin to grace is said to be a greater miracle than raising a dead body to life. So, they who, by the power of God, perform this wonderful act, may well be as- tonished at its magnitude. Some of our dissenting brethren have been, for years, intimately associated, in family life, with Catholics. They have had Catholic papers, magazines and devo- tional books at hand and read them. Yet they seem to be utterly incapable of fruitfully understanding what they read and as far away from conversion as if they had never perused a line. They even go to church with Catholics, hear mission sermons and are educated partly in our convents, and yet their spiri- tual blindness is astounding and even their mentality appears darkened on this subject. Some are masters of pro- fane logic and the philosophy of the schools, and yet they do not grasp the logical position of the Catholic Church. Some are great Bible readers, and yet they will not observe how the Bible contradicts their creed in numerous points. So, it requires the supernatural intervention of the Holy Ghost to open the eyes of their mind, heart and soul, and thus many of them never pray, as Cardinal Newman did, when a Protest- ant for the "leading of that kindly light." In some instances, I presume, it is far easier to convert the heathen than the mass of our separated brethren, and it requires a miracle of the first magnitude to accomplish it. Often, the unlearned and the humble, the little ones, as the Psalmist calls them, have more success than the enlightened, the erudite and the mighty. One of the bitterest crosses and trials of Catholics who have Protestant relations and fami- lies, is to see how little progress is made in converting them after years of prayer, self-denial and good example. The very acts thus performed are not infrequently, if not ridiculed, regarded as foolishness. There is nothing to do but persevere in supplication and trust that some day, the seal may be removed from the eyes and understanding of those whose salvation we are most anx- ious to procure through Mother Church. —Jas. R. Randall in Catholic Colum- bian.

The Present Age.

Compared with the age of faith and hope, our age is dry, cold, and heart- less. We have nothing of that tender sensibility, nothing of those warm, gushing feelings, fresh from the heart, of that generous love of husband and wife, of parents and children, or that distinguished devotion to the welfare and interests of our neighbor that we find in the old Christian romance. We have nothing of that simplicity, that freshness of feeling, that light hearted- ness, that sunshine of the soul, that perpetual youth, that characterized the Christian populations of the middle ages. Our hearts are dark and gloomy, our spirits are jaded, our faces are worn and haggard. We have no youth of the heart. Life to us is a senseless, de- licious, and a heavy and hateful exist- ence. Our affections are blighted from the cradle, and we live a burden to ourselves. Oh, give us back the good old times of faith and duty when reigned the soul as love, and the heart's joy gave new melody to the song of birds, and new beauty and fragrance of flowers.—Brownson.

IMITATION OF CHRIST.

The King's Highway of the Holy Cross

Although thou mayest have been rapt to the third heaven with St. Paul, thou art not thereby secured so that thou shalt suffer no adversity. I said Jesus, will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. (Acts ix. 16.) To suffer, therefore, is what waits for thee, if thou wilt love Jesus and constantly serve Him.

Would to God thou wert worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus! how great a glory would be laid up for thee, how great joy would it be to thee, how great glory to God, and how great edification to thy neighbor!

All recommend patience; but alas, how few are there that desire to suffer! With good reason oughtest thou will- ingly to suffer for a little for Christ, since many suffer greater things for the world.

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The Remarkable

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Jim was an orphan boy who lived with his Uncle Frank, a man of sticks, to Roy. His grown strong, and he had a boy of the time he said Roy might as it behaved in slits across the and put in so home for the boy.

It was severe walk, but one prize, he sprang hopping, half until he landed the croquet in his hand, and say, "Am I not that, he wanted exploring every corner of the house, but when he was lifted, he was not groveling, he was sometimes called 'Hop'."

At first, when he was called 'Hop', as it was, but soon he was shut up in prison. He kicked a beam of beams baked favorite dish.

We decided feed himself, fast beside the stood aside in dismal caving minutes, the Roy, opened tentatively for it went to the half-starved.

One morning window, I saw Harold, our small, pebbled down as if so.

Jim soon knew when to be fed, at mother went begging for grain. Some walk to meet pieces of meat.

Jim spent gardens, but he never thought he nations, away. I followed, and when he would hop, he had a good would fly to the glossy black ways stood learned to pretty, royal take a mor.

Each day, mess, which she carried. It was then He would opportunity, then a clothes pin the grass.

He often grass or dirt to remedy day after chicken b and her once. He gradually of faint, a pitcher w batsman. dive from bone