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LESSONS for SUNDAYS and HOLY-DAYS.

Morning—Habakkuk ii. Hebrews ix. to 17. Evening—Habakkuk iii. or Zephaniah iii. John vi. to 22.

THURSDAY, NOV. 22, 1888.

THE LUTHER CELEBRATION.—The universality of the observance of the day celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther throughout Christendom has been the most striking tribute ever paid to the memory of any mere mortal. That Germany should remember its great national hero is a matter of no wonder. But that Russia, Spain, Italy and Belgium should have joined in paying homage to the great Teuton, has been a surprise indeed, and is a portent of which not only the Papacy will do well to take heed, but the rulers of all lands wherein a political policy prevails in harmony with the Vatican and the Curia.

GREAT REFORMS STILL NEEDED.—It is a sad reflection upon humanity, and shadows darkly this wonderful century of progress, that while the people of Germany were preparing for their splendid demonstrations in honour of Luther, their kins-people and next neighbours, the Austrians, were witnessing in their Capital and in several towns the hateful spectacle of military and police being ordered to suppress religious worship, conducted by the Old Catholics, and to punish citizens for having children baptised by non-Romanist priests! But such is the obtuseness of the Papacy, that with the story of Luther's work ringing its ears for four centuries, it is still as stupid as when poor Luther wrote, "Who was I, to set myself up against the majesty of the Pope, before whom trembles all the kings of the earth?" With such infamies still being carried on by Papal authority, for the civil power in Austria and elsewhere is still wielded against liberty of conscience and of worship, even in private houses, it has been well to bring before the nations under the sway of the Papacy the story of the mighty works done by the monk who shook the world, whose heroic resistance to the power of the Roman church has won him the homage of the greatest peoples of the earth. These Luther celebrations, then, with all their weaknesses, will find noble justification in the influence they cannot fail to exercise over those unhappy nations which are degraded by political subservising to the Pope and the Curia at Rome.

DARKNESS THE WOMB OF HOPE.—But while it is sad to witness a people like the Austrians, Germans, submitting to these atrocious acts of tyranny because of a Concordat with the Pope, there is after all hope for their emancipation in the very darkness of the cloud of oppression now hanging over that empire. Many of the most memorable advances which the human mind has ever made in the direction of truth and freedom, have been made after a period of apparent retrocession, as if error and delusion must attain a certain degree of intensity and be presented with a certain degree of grossness before the indolence of the human mind can be adequately roused to vindicate its rights,

and with these the claims of truth and of God. But for Tetzel there would have been no Luther. Austria needs the screw tightening, and then the Pope's power would be snapped by the tension. How the rulers of a great state in this century can enter into a Concordat, after such a record of these treaties as history records in those made by Benedict XIII, Clement XII, Pius VII, only shows how utterly artificial are the bonds holding such States together, and how near may be a great Revolution in Europe.

LUTHER CELEBRATION BLUNDERS.—In hearing and reading the large number of speeches made at our local celebrations, one was painfully impressed with the need for a good, cheap Life of Luther, an honest life, giving the portrait of the man as he was, "warts and all." With only one exception, which we are thankful and proud as Churchmen to record, which was the speech of Professor Clark of Trinity College, every address in Toronto betrayed a shallowness of historic reading which became very wearisome and irritating. The authority all seemed to have confined themselves to what was no fuller nor more reliable than that of the magazine articles written for the glorification of Luther and of one of his theological notions in high favor with the sects. Some strange words were used, intended to exalt Luther, but which he would have repelled with strong words of anger. One speaker said, "We owe the doctrine of justification by faith to Luther!" Others said, "We owe all our liberties to Luther," others, "We owe the Bible to Luther," others, "We owe all we have most precious to Luther," and so on and so forth. We thus get at the secret of the marvellously absurd belief of many, of well nigh all sectarians, that between the days of the Apostles and A. D. 1483 there was a total blank in the history of the Church, and that the birth of Luther was a second Incarnation.

A DOCTRINAL CONNECTION.—As we write we have before us a copy of the Will of an illustrious Roman Catholic Archbishop, who lay dying as Luther lay in his cradle. In this Will the Archbishop wrote, "Believing that not for my merits, but by the virtue of the passion of Jesus Christ, I shall have part in a future resurrection." Later on he wrote, "I place my hope of Salvation in the passion of Christ." Yet we are told that until Luther came men died in total ignorance of the Gospel! We have no wish to play the part of Devil's Advocate in detracting from Luther's fame, but we must advise his eulogisers to read a little better class of books. A distinguished writer says, "What we want to see in a biography is the man himself and not the biographer's affection for him. Benevolence does really great injustice often in this way, when it least intends it. A friendly portrait is very apt to be a weak one." We very much fear that an appreciation of the real greatness of Luther was not generally enhanced by the display of oratorical fireworks which so unwisely were let off at the late celebration.

ANOTHER GROSS ERROR EXPOSED.—At the Luther meeting a speaker, who lashed himself into a perfect rage of excitement by wildly gesticulating and pacing about the platform like a bear in a cage, said that the Indulgences against which Luther protested, gave to the buyers absolute immunity in this world and the next from the penalties threatened by God against sin in any form; that murder even was licensed for a fee. Of all the mad enterprises of human folly and shame, the sale of Indulgences was about the chief, but at the same time to say that these rascally papers were licenses to commit crime, is to say as ignorant a thing as utter want of knowledge allows a man to utter. Melancholy as it is to see a people like the Austrians so lacking in dignity and independence as to bear the yoke of the Papacy as laid upon their necks by a Concordat which deprives them of all religious liberty, it is as melancholy to see a proud people

like the Canadians, so boastful of their education and so justly boastful of their freedom, yet so enslaved by sectarian teachers that they swallow any toolishness, if only it is uttered with plentiful gestures, and expressed in flowery phrases, full of sound and fury. Much that was said at the Luther celebration was, however, an insult to the audience, the great bulk of whom knew history better than the speakers.

ERROR AS TO JUSTIFICATION.—Almost every speaker dwelt upon the so called revelation to Luther, and by Luther to the world, as they affirmed, of the doctrine of "Justification by faith alone." The word "alone" was again and again emphasized, even to the extent by Mr. Milligan, a Presbyterian, of being shouted out in stentorian tones as though all the virtue of the phrase lay in the word "alone." Now this much disputed doctrine was either in the Bible before Luther's day or not. If it was there then Luther did not reveal it to the world, and if it was not there then his revelation has no more authority than the book of Mormon. St. James says in his Epistle, "Faith if it hath not works is dead, being alone." Yet said Mr. Milligan, "Faith only justifies when it is alone." We leave this divine to reconcile himself to St. James. Luther, we all know, could not harmonize himself and St. James, so he threw St. James and his epistle overboard! Those who hold the Faith alone notion will have to throw overboard not St. James only, but the great bulk of the Bible before they can get Scripture as a whole to agree with this grossly superstitious perversion of the truth. Faith and works are as closely related as body and spirit; if the body moves it is because of the spirit being active within, if the body is immovable it is because the spirit has fled, and what kills one destroys both. The doctrine, if it is worth calling a doctrine, of "Justification by Faith alone" is not scriptural, if it were so, it would destroy all reasonable belief in inspiration. The erroneous view of this doctrine prevailing in the sects has already dried up the Christian life of millions by leading them to substitute a mere mental assent to a doctrine for a life of godliness shining by good works. The sectarian view involves this muddle. It first tells us that man can do nothing of himself acceptable to God, then it tells us that a man's salvation is secured by an act of mental volition! So in the sects the Gospel of the Incarnation, Life, Death, Resurrection of Christ, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Sacramental union of the believer with his Divine Head, are all made of none effect, for the sake of a metaphysical theory which is as contradictory to God's word as it is to man's reason and to itself.

ENGLISH FREEDOM NOT FROM LUTHER.—It makes one blush to hear men whose sires made the old land great, to hear them speak as though none dared to resist the Pope before Luther. Have they never heard of one Humphrey, Duke of Gloster, who, when the Pope, about the year 1450, wrote letters derogatory to the king of England's supreme authority in his realm, said such documents should be in safe keeping, and therefore put them on the fire! There was an English precedent, therefore, for Luther burning the Pope's Bull. Have they never heard that so odious to the body of the people of England was the very suspicion of subservency to the Pope that it was made one of the articles of depositism against Edward II, in 908, and against Richard II in 1399? Are they ignorant of the bold stand made by the English Church and nation against the Pope's authority from the very first year of the Pope's mission in the 7th century, up to the Reformation? As bluff Henry the unsavoury said, "By the order and sufferance of God we are kings of England, and the kings of England never had any superior but God alone!" No! No! England owes much to Luther, but the Catholics of England were Protestants for seven centuries before he was born, and they reformed their Church without his aid or guidance.