

DO OUR FRENCH COUNTRYMEN NEED MORE LIGHT?

(By Rev. C. A. Doudiet, Montreal.)

The question of the propriety of missions to Roman Catholics, depends largely on the proof, negative or affirmative, of the right of the Church of Rome to be called a Church of Christ. We do not care to contest its right to call itself a Christian Church. It is as much Christian, as it is apostolic, having at many important points, departed as widely from apostolic doctrines as it has from Christ's.

A commercial house often keeps its original title, although its founders have long since passed away, and the new managers of the business carry it on in a totally different manner from that of their predecessors. Thus Rome has kept the original title, but under shelter of that name of Christian, has allowed large numbers of anti-Christian errors to flourish.

The apostles had foreseen this. The Spirit had spoken expressly, that in latter times, some should depart from the faith, "giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." 1. Tim. 4: 1, 2. It was revealed to Paul, that in the very heart of the Church, in the Temple of God, "a man of sin" would exalt himself above all that it called God, and show himself that he is God. The Apostle graphically described that coming of the "son of perdition," with all power, and signs and lying wonders, and all deceivableness of unrighteousness. 2. Thess. 2: 1-12.

True, Rome is not expressly named in these quotations. And so it is explained that certain Gnostic sects were meant, that the "man of sin" is an antichrist yet to come, and that the "scarlet woman" of John in Revelation, was symbolical of Pagan Rome "drunken with the blood of the Saints." Rev. xvii: 6.

Therefore in contesting the claim of the Roman Church of today, to call itself a Church of Christ, we try its spirit, according to the counsel given by John (Ep. iv: i) to see whether it is of God. Jesus once said to his disciples: "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples." Let the Church which has departed from the words of Christ be judged from these words for "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God, he that abideth in the teaching the same hath both the Father and the Son." 2 John. 9.

So we ask: Can a Church be a Church of Christ, which discourages and forbids the reading of God's word? Paul writes that "Faith cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. x. 17. James says that "God begets his people with the Word of Truth." Jas. 1: 18. It was written, Paul again says, "for our learning, that

we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Rom. 15: 4, therefore he commended his fellow Christians, not to priests or bishops, but to "God, and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

In all this, the apostles follow the precedent of the prophets, who referred opponents and dissenters "To the law and the testimony, if any one speaks not according to their word, it is because there is no light in them." Is. 8: 20. The law of God, writes David, is perfect. The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Ps. 12: 6. That word was to be diligently taught even to children. Deut. xi: 19, a command repeated by our Lord in John v: 39.

But here many Roman Catholics and not a few Protestants, will say: Rome does not forbid the Scriptures to her adherents. The unauthorized versions alone are forbidden on the double ground of incompleteness and incorrectness. Incompleteness, because lacking the "Apocrypha". Incorrectness, because they flatly contradict Romish doctrines in many places. We do not care to discuss these assertions here. If the Church of Rome wished to give her people the Scriptures, she has wealth and learning sufficient to publish cheap editions of the Bible, revised and corrected to date. She has not done so, and she does not seem in any hurry to do it.

The fact which cannot be successfully denied is that the people as a whole, in the Province of Quebec, and generally in all Roman Catholic countries, have not got the Scriptures, nor liberty to have and study them.

The Word of God is Light, and it is a suspicious circumstance, to say the least, when a church dares not put that light in the hands of its adherents, lest they should discover wherein they are deceived, and led away from the Truth.

Now, our mission work among the French-Canadians is to persuade as many as we can to procure the Bible, and to read it. As Augustine wrote (De gratia c. xviii) so we speak to all who consent to hear and say: "We are brethren! Why do we yet dispute among ourselves? Our Father did not die without leaving us His Testament. Let us open it. Let us read it! We are brethren, why should we dispute with each other?"

When an honest seeker after Truth thus takes hold of God's word, he discovers such things as the following: That in kneeling to statues and images, from the crucifix down to the representations of the virgin, angels and saints, he breaks a formal command of the Law of God. Ex. xx: 4, 5. That there is but "One Mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us." 1. Tim. II: 5. One who is "able to save to the