

SECTS, SECTARIAN MINISTERS, AND THE QUESTION OF HONESTY.

Personally, I may say that (waiving all question as to inculpable error or heterodoxy, of which God alone will judge), I have much regard for the clergy of all denominations who do not make themselves odious by their fanaticism, malevolence, or palpable dishonesty. The larger portion, however, I believe to be well-meaning men, having at heart the objects and interests of religion, and of their profession, in respect to which their zeal is certainly very apparent. As a class, therefore, I esteem them, though holding them to be wholly unentitled to be regarded as ministers "of God," whether authorized as ministers of the various non-Catholic Churches or not. I so hold, for the reason (among other reasons) that it is clearly repugnant to a rational conception of the attributes of Him who is Perfect Wisdom and Truth to suppose that He has instituted a system which not only excuses, but practically invites and involves contradictory results, where the objective reality, i. e., the Divine Idea in Revelation, is real only in its one designed sense. On the ministerial question, the Rev. Dr. Talmage, of Brooklyn, seems to me to recognize his true position in the clerical world as one simply of Christian manhood, holding apparently a view of apostolical or ministerial succession, which (even were their claim to mere "orders" admitted) must be pronounced to be hardly less applicable to what a Congregationalist preacher in England recently called "the arrogant historical Episcopate." The preacher referred to was alluding, of course, to the English Bishops—an "historical Episcopate" originating as a new organization and State establishment in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and deriving jurisdiction from her, through Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, who, in fact, acknowledged holding "the said Archbishopric of Canterbury, and the possessions of the same, entirely, as well the spiritualities as the temporalities thereof, only of the Queen's Majesty and Crown Royal."

"Go preach the Gospel," said Dr. Talmage a short time ago, to his audience at Chautauqua: "You say you are not licenced; I licenced you. Go preach the Gospel—preach it in the Sabbath schools—in the prayer meetings—in the highways—in the hedges." "Preaching the Gospel develops upon all," says another, Dr. Parker (of Toronto conference). These views, however, cannot be said to be very novel, though we are told by the Rev. Thomas Dixon, Jr., of the 23rd street Baptist church, New York, that it was the late Rev. Ward Beecher of Brooklyn, who "gave America a free pulpit," for (as he explains), "He stood upon his *manhood* for his charter as a minister, etc." But, on the other hand, it may obviously be objected, that without taking exception to liberty of speech between man and man, and raising no question as to the latitude to be avowed for fair expositions and arguments of men with each other, or for the benefit of their hearers, in regard to religious questions; still, as between man and his Maker, it is certain that no "right" can possibly exist in any human being to mutilate the Word, by passing off a few picked phrases, or chosen doctrines, as, literally, comprehending the entire gospel of God, unconditioned by Revelation as a whole, or by the facts accompanying it. Take, for example, the following excerpt from the Rev. Dr. Talmage: "You say, 'there are so many things I have to believe, and so many things in the shape of a creed that I have to adopt, that I am kept back.' No, no! you need believe but *two things*, namely, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that you are one of them." Dr. Talmage, I must admit, makes, at times, some very instructive and wise observations, but as to the sentiment here expressed, which is defective in point of strict accuracy, let it suffice to answer in the words of Jeremiah xxiii., 28: "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully."

Now that ministers of the Churches are beginning to realize the futility of the old reform platform, by which it was thought practicable, upon non-Catholic principles, to preserve intact some cherished doctrines or remnants of Revelation, as understood by the new lights; the absurdity, too, of supposing it possible to harmonize Church authority with the asserted supremacy of private judgment being likewise now acknowledged by thinking men, it may be asked, what development are we next to look for after revision of the beliefs of non-Catholic Churches has been accomplished? Clearly, it seems to me, that as the root principle of sectarianism is not at all consistent with development of a unitive and harmonious character; but, on the contrary, is forever giving rise to further diversities, disintegrations and denials, thus continuously effecting a more and more complex heterogeneity of beliefs, it is difficult to see how results differing essentially from those heretofore obtained can be expected from it in the future. It appears to me, therefore, considering the facts of the case, and having in view the circumstances of those who cannot be reached by arguments from reason confirming Catholic principles, that it would certainly be a desideratum to inaugurate some method of arousing the lethargic multitude to a sense of their individual responsibilities, under their professed rule of faith; and so hasten the final issue, while in the meantime rescuing souls from sectarian domination. What the good people really require is to be recalled to the fact that they do not at all fulfil their obligations by cultivating the emotional side of religion or indulging in mere sentiment, whilst relegating to others their personal duty of rational investigation, thus abdication, as it were, their manhood, and submitting to be swayed and controlled by the beliefs, in beliefs, unbeliefs and imaginations of ministers, whose principles debar them from claiming for themselves, or and who, though assuming the imposing name of ministers "of God," are in reality simply and solely ministers "of man"—specialists, of course, I would say, in the interests of the organizations to which they respectively belong, but possessing merely their own or other purely human calling and authority. Even as specialists, moreover, it appears to me that (aside from Christian doctrines and morals not distinctively Protestant, but, on the contrary, borrowed originally from the Catholic Church or Catholic divines; and now, for the time being, forming part of the credenda or teaching of sectarian bodies) the instrumentality of the ministers, as instructors, cannot be said to be of any special importance, so far as Christian faith is concerned, if it be assumed that it is not at all the notions and glosses of the preacher but the identical "Word" itself as addressed to the individual soul which conditions "faith" properly so called. Be this as it may, however, it is at least certain that since what is false can be no subject of supernatural revelation, neither can it be an object of divine faith.

The Rev. Dr. Chas. Hodge, Professor at Princeton, in his Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, p. 183, says: "The Bible is a plain book. It is intelligible by the people. And they have the right, and are bound to read and interpret it for themselves." And certainly if the Bible, as interpreted by private judgment, be the divine rule of faith, individual duty in regard to it must be obvious enough. What, however, in this case, the "people" have to do, is, as Hodge remarks, "to interpret for themselves," and not, by dereliction of duty, and a degrading surrender of intellect, rest upon the interpretations of ministers, whose incompetency as reliable guides for others is virtually, if not formally, admitted by themselves.

Recognizing, then, individually, their personal obligations in this connection, the result of the "people's" inquiries would, no doubt, in many cases be enlightenment to the fact that sectarian Churches, being of purely human institution, must, as Churches "of God," be held to be sheer nullities, though, as associations or State establishments, more or less Christian, ranking as to authority with the Salvation Army, or Bible, Tract, Temperance, or Young Men's Christian societies, composed, for the most part, of very worthy people, they naturally, of course, as agencies for the promotion of religious sentiment or feeling, enlist much consideration and sympathy. Having advanced so far in their investigations, and reading the conclusion indicated for which, indeed, it seems to me, any reasoning man must find that *a priori* considerations abundantly suffice, there should not, I think, be much difficulty in realizing the further fact that unsectarian Churches have not, heretofore, failed to develop congenial unrealities in respect both to their doctrines and practice. This assertion might easily be substantiated by illustration; but, waiving consideration of the point here, I merely, as bearing upon it, add a suggestion to interested investigators, of the desirability of adopting a "motto," preliminary to their personal enquiries, viz: "Hold fast that which is true and good; but search out untruths and shams."

Regarding the questions of sincerity and of inculpable errors or defects in matters of belief, upon which, as involving personal considerations beyond human ken and judgment, it is not possible to pronounce definitely—we, nevertheless, should not lose sight of some related points, which at times seem to be overlooked by a class of divines who argue as if simple "honesty" as to beliefs and disbeliefs places the heterodoxy on the same level with the orthodoxy, so far as necessary beliefs are concerned. Here, however, it appears to be assumed not merely that a minimum of religious beliefs may suffice for the extremely ignorant, or persons having no knowledge whatever of distinctively Christian doctrine, but that it should also suffice for all Christians who profess to be guided by either Bible or Church. As bearing upon these points, however, there are some considerations which should not be overlooked. In the first place to adopt, and partially paraphrase, some observations of the late Archbishop Kenrick, when Bishop of Philadelphia, it is clear that "though sincerity, like ignorance, may extenuate, and sometimes excuse, what is wrongfully done, it is no passport to beatitude." Nevertheless, the grace purchased by the death of Christ may be bestowed by Divine mercy even on those who have never heard the saving name. Yet as the reception of the Word is obligatory on those to whom it is authoritatively promulgated, and as faith necessarily implies assent to the whole

revelation of God, written or unwritten, the question obviously arises whether faith can possibly exist in cases where the evidences having been sufficiently "presented to challenge investigation and move assent, the authority of the Church and her doctrines are nevertheless positively rejected." The Bishop responds to this question in the negative, expressing, at the same time, his inability to offer a more favorable opinion, even where a pious disposition is cherished, and some of the chief Christian mysteries accepted, while, prejudices interfering, other Christian mysteries or doctrines are "positively rejected." For faith, the reception of all revealed truth, is certainly incompatible with the rejection of any one revealed doctrine, authoritatively delivered. To suppose otherwise is to make God's gracious operations "clash with His institutions." I need not here remark upon the question of what might, in a sense, be called the quasi-sacramental character of the Word, as authoritatively promulgated. But when speaking of faith it will, of course, be understood that "faith" is meant, not mere "opinion," which latter, though not in the order of grace, really seems to be the guiding light of most non-Catholics, who apparently have no coherent conception of matters of faith than as religious "opinions," which, as such, can neither be of general nor of permanent obligation.

But again, on the point of honesty, there are some special considerations to be noticed. For instance, can it suffice to believe that hap-hazard Protestant opinions (I speak of distinct opinions, apart from the doctrinal and moral teaching borrowed from the Catholic Church), traditionally inherited from "reformers," or derived from other unauthorized and notoriously one-sided malcontents (as the word Protestant sufficiently implies), absolve the enquirer from the personal duty and honesty of rational investigation? Is a false conscience an impossibility? (Proverbs xvi., 25.) Is it not a well-known fact that, with rare exceptions, sectarian ministers display an extreme aversion to the perusal of Catholic publications? Is it often we find them fairly representing Catholic doctrine? Is it often, and not rather remarkably seldom, that they give evidence of having seriously and dispassionately investigated for themselves Catholic principles in Catholic authors? And is it mainly, or consistent, or honest, for professed free enquirers to accept as final the statements of prejudiced, bigoted and fanatical opponents of Catholicity? Frankly, I may say, as to my own personal experience, after thirty years multifarious reading of religious controversies, sermons, expositions and essays, that, contrasting Catholic writers with their opponents, I have found the former almost universally to be, at all times, incomparably the more temperate, considerate, generous, charitable, unprejudiced and fair. Their antagonists, on the contrary (though of late years really scholarly men show much improvement), I have, with few exceptions, found illiberal, intemperate, uncharitable, bigoted, fanatical, or unfair to say nothing of their mere mistakes, or of the very imperfect knowledge they almost uniformly exhibit on Catholic topics.

But, furthermore, the question emerges, as to the moral responsibility of persons of intelligence, culture, discernment, and capacity for research, to whom the Word has been graciously proposed from time to time in one way or another. How far honesty or sincerity, in such cases, will serve to cover inconsiderateness and negligence I do not here enquire, though it is to be feared that in some instances the words of St. Paul may not be inapplicable: "If our Gospel be hidden, it is hidden to those who perish; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ should not shine unto them." After, however, considering all points bearing upon the question of the honesty or dishonesty of individual Christians who "certify concerning the faith," (and I must confess that in my judgment very much more can be said in favor of the lay people of the sects than for their ministerial instructors, who in reality are practically both Church and Bible to probably ninety-nine per cent of their lay followers,) the fact remains that salvation is by grace "through faith," which is "the gift of God," and "not of words." (Eph. ii. 8, 9.)

A HAPPY HINT.—We don't believe in keeping a good thing when we hear of it, and for this reason take special pleasure in recommending those suffering with Piles in any form, blind, bleeding, protruding, etc., to get Second 29 cts to the Wicksman & Brown Drug Co., Baltimore, Md., or ask your druggist to order for you.

Mrs. H. Hall, Navarino, N. Y., writes: "For years I have been troubled with Liver Complaint. The doctors said my liver was hardened and enlarged. I was troubled with dizziness, pain in my shoulder, constipation, and gradually losing flesh all the time. I was under the care of three physicians, but did not get any relief. A friend sent me a bottle of Northrop & Lyman's Vegetable Discovery, and the benefit I have received from it is far beyond my expectation. I feel better now than I have done for years."

GENTLEMEN.—In 1888 I was severely afflicted with gravel of the kidneys when I suffered great pain. I was recommended to take Burdock Blood Bitters, which I did, finding great relief, and after taking a bottle can truly say I am cured and have not since been troubled. I highly recommend it.

PATRICK WEST, Calloden P. O., Ont.

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FATHER SHERMAN.

The Immense Audience Carried Away By His Eloquence.

Father Thomas Ewing Sherman's fame as an accomplished orator had evidently preceded him, for when he stepped into the pulpit at St. Francis Xavier's Church in West 10th street, New York, to preach his first sermon in New York city, the seats and aisles were filled from the chancel to the outer door.

Several thousand persons were turned away from the church, because it was not big enough to hold them. It was so uncomfortable inside on account of the heat and crowd, that several women fainted and had to be carried out during the sermon.

Father Sherman does not look unlike his illustrious father, Gen. Sherman, and he showed in the vigorous attack which he made upon the arguments used by infidels and agnostics to support their belief, much of the same determined spirit that Gen. Sherman exhibited on his march to the sea.

Father Sherman is tall and slender, and the lines of his pale face are clear cut and refined.

A WONDERFUL VOICE.—He speaks rapidly and his gestures are few but forcible. His manner of speaking is very easy and he has a voice so clear and penetrating that the softest tone could be distinctly heard in every part of the building, and as it became louder in the impassioned parts of the discourse, it seemed to roll through the structure like a note of the big organ in the choir gallery.

The audience was at times spell-bound by his flights of eloquence and appeals to men and women to live aright. Father Sherman felt the sympathy of his hearers, who in turn had been deeply touched by his wonderful personal magnetism and presence, and the priests who heard the sermon say he was never more eloquent.

The discourse, which was a plea in favor of the Bible against the attacks of Rationalism, was founded on the last book of St. John, Chapter xxii., verse 24, which reads as follows: "This is that disciple who gives the testimony of these and hath written of these; and we know that his testimony is true."

A DEFENSE OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.—He said in part: "The Gospel of St. John is the foundation of the Universal Church. It stands as a splendid historic monument, and the assaults of time only strengthen it. Our faith to be a pleasure and lasting must be reasonable and founded on argument, and the best argument in the world is the four books of St. John.

"St. John's Gospel is the last account of the life of Christ and it is the best. It is intended to supply the gaps and make up what is deficient in the other histories of Christ's life. Rationalists fire the hot shot of criticism at the Gospel of St. John, but they do not have the slightest effect upon the argument of St. John, and his story and doctrine only shine the brighter in the work of adverse opinions.

"The foundation upon which rests St. John's Gospel can never be destroyed. Rationalism tries to make men believe that these gospels are mere stories, the work of brilliant minds, it admits, but minds without the power of revelation. Rationalism looks upon the glorious teaching of St. John as mere fables in which the wonders therein related are merely the invention of man.

"It says that Christ lived a moral life as a man and when He died His enthusiastic followers made Him a hero and worshipped His memory as an idol. It tries to bring Christ to the level of a man by trying to break the authenticity of the historical Gospel.

"In reply to those statements we can say that this Holy Book of God is our best evidence. The Bible tells a story that bears in itself the inherent evidence of truth so clearly presented that any fair-minded and unprejudiced person cannot reject or doubt it.

"Rationalism tries to show that the Gospel of St. John came from Alexandria, but the book itself shows that it was written by a Jew. It presents an intimate knowledge of Jewish customs, manners and methods of thought and speech. The writer had a profound knowledge of the prophecies of old, and knew that they were fulfilled in the coming of Christ.

"So correct is the interpretation and delineation of the Jewish character that the very prejudices of the Jew appear. Jews were prejudiced against women and would not address their wives in the street or in public places. They therefore found fault with the Saviour when they found Christ talking with a woman at the well. If St. John had not shown this opposition to women his books might have been taken to have been written by some one else.

"The style of a writer is to be taken into consideration in judging of his nationality, and every line of the Gospel of St. John shows that it is made by a Hebrew. The brilliancy of these gospels have dazzled the minds of theologians for centuries.

look at the book itself. Jerusalem was totally destroyed in the latter part of the first century. Not one stone was left standing on another, but the writer of St. John's Gospel certainly was there before the destruction and knew all about it.

He shows it by his knowledge of places, people and the location of buildings, and the ceremonies that were common before the destruction. His statements are exact and could never have been the result of hearsay evidence. He must have seen what he wrote about.

"What St. John saw others have seen in his writings, and we look today through generations of the past direct to Christ and see the glory of the only begotten Son of God full of grace and truth."

Reason for Believing in the Church. As in the material creation, one eye discovers beauty in the tree, the flower or the plant different from those observed by another eye guided by a different intelligence, so the mind of each man, viewing the Church which God has made, will look at it according to the peculiarity of his own mind and see the truth with greater or less force, but nevertheless with sufficient reason to avoid a mistake, and hence each man may give a different reason why he believes in the Catholic Church. But the first reason is: The grace of God, the light of the Holy Ghost, for without it no man can receive the gift of faith. This grace is obtained by prayer, which is the universal means of salvation. As God is prior to Satan, as good is prior to falsehood, so is the Church of God prior to all these that are not of God. Hence we are most reasonable in adhering to that Church which is universal in time, for this everlasting existence proves its Divine origin.—Bishop Bronck.

Drunkenness. Here is the doctrine of the Catholic Church on the subject of drunkenness. It is so clear and in such accord with common sense that it requires no explanation. A simple statement will suffice: 1. "Whoever drinks deliberately to such an extent as to lose his reason commits a mortal sin." 2. "Whoever knows, by past experience, that when drunk he is accustomed to blasphemous or utter improper language, or to injure others about him, besides the sin of drunkenness, is guilty of those other crimes committed during the state of intoxication." 3. "Whoever does not adopt the proper means for the correction of this vicious habit of drunkenness remains in a continual state of sin." 4. "Whoever entices and urges another to excess in drinking, whom he forces will be intoxicated, commits a mortal sin." 5. "Any seller of liquor who continues to supply to any individual that he knows will become intoxicated therewith, commits a mortal sin, because he deliberately co-operates in the grievous sin of another." 6. "Whoever is guilty of excess in drinking, though not to intoxication, in such a way as to cause distress to his family by squandering that which is needed for their support, commits a mortal sin against charity and justice. In like manner, who ever thus renders himself unable to pay his lawful debts, although he may not drink to intoxication, commits a mortal sin."—Rev. Patrick O'Brien, C. T. A. News.

C. C. Jacobs, N. Y., says: "Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil cured a bad case of piles of 8 years' standing, having tried almost every known remedy." Besides two Buffalo Physicians, "without relief," but the Oil cured him; he thinks it cannot be recommended too highly.

SIX YEARS' SUFFERING.—DEAR SIR.—I was troubled for six years with erysipelas, and two bottles of Burdock Blood Bitters entirely cured me. I keep B. B. constantly in the house and think it an effectual cure for all diseases caused by bad blood.

MRS. M. DOWSETT, Portland, Ont.

A PROMPT RESULT.—DEAR SIR.—Two years ago I was very ill with jaundice and tried many medicines which did me no good until I was advised to try B. B., when, after using half a bottle, I was effectually cured.

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OUR BO... There is a garden in a flowers began... The oak was flowers, the stand alone, t... fruit. But a up its head a golden sunsh... The king stooped to kiss you so bright others are sad... "I thought you put me h... bright as I co... best I could, pansy." Boys and G... just where G... A... The follow simple metho man to count apt to take th... When M. Minister of t... visit one day sending up h... the great u... discussion ar... Suddenly h... handed the M... ing it he at... voice, and a... manner. Puzzled a... and the mar... produced up... cast a furtiv... his astonish... was simply without a su... More puzz... man, after... leave, and p... servant, to... for he hims... the Interior... "You hav... to the Minist... had a most... paper, with... What did it... "Sir," r... is the expl... you to keep... compromise... very liable... himself is a... has order... in the rais... place a show... and take i... him that hi... ter of him... self, just... and imm... instruction... "Tom, t... less boy I e... upset gear t... the spoils... you need... up for you... and replac... which Tom... sage throu... "I'd say... if you had... Tom as he... door to join... for him... "Sister, W... Won't you... Nellie, con... slate. "You n... to underst... that," Ma... the slate in... hand. "F... fuss with... have any... "Never... "O, yo... pose I can... and very... able man... puzzling... where her... "Maria... stop at... kitchen... peaches, b... before he... "No, m... member... minded al... pettishly... go and o... "You h... her mot... age to wa... when Tom... "No, I... go," she... and execut... It was... Marian... walk, she... cool off. A gree... dropped i... house, ar... tatively a... "It's t... good a h... have suc... isn't it?" "Yes, chestnut... such a p... ain, fan... brimmed... "Yet... is sharp, a velvet... and the... where th... places th... think of... "Wh... est.