

LEO XIII'S ENCYCLICAL

On the Study of Holy Scripture.

Venerable Brethren. Health and Apostolic Benediction

A GIFT OF GOD TO MAN

The Providence of God, which, by an admirably loving design, elevated the human race, at the beginning, to a participation of the Divine Nature; which afterwards restored man to his original dignity by delivering him from the universal stain, and from consequent ruin that same Providence has bestowed upon man a most precious benefit when revealing unto him, by supernatural means, the hidden treasures of His Divinity, wisdom and mercy. Divine revelation includes some truths which are not outside the range of unaided reason, and which have been revealed to man to the end that they may be known with ease, and held with most firm conviction, all fear of error being removed. Nevertheless, the revelation of these truths cannot be said to be absolutely necessary. It is necessary only because God, in His infinite goodness, has destined man to a supernatural end." (Vatican Council). This supernatural revelation, according to the belief of the Universal Church, is comprised both in her unwritten traditions and in those books which are called sacred and canonical. Those books are sacred and canonical because, having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author, and because, being what they are, they have been given into the charge of the Catholic Church. Such has always been the belief and the public teaching of the Church in respect of the books of the Old and the New Testament. Men are in possession of documents of a venerable antiquity, which show that God spoke to the world, first by His Prophets, afterwards by His own mouth, and then by His Apostles. These same documents show how God gave us what we call the canonical Scriptures (St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*), which are the very oracles. They form an Epistle from our Father in Heaven to man upon the earth wandering far from his eternal home, and they have been transmitted to us by inspired writers. From their origin, therefore, we see what is the excellence of the Scriptures. God being their author, they declare unto us His highest mysteries, His designs, His works.

"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES."

Hence it follows that the branch of theological science which is concerned with the defence and interpretation of the Sacred Books is of the highest importance and utility. Other sciences which seemed to us to be of service for the promotion of the glory of God and the salvation of souls we have helped with willing heart. They have been the subject of many letters and addresses of ours, which, under God's blessing, have borne good fruit. For a long time past we have cherished the future design of giving a new impulse to the noble study of the Divine Scriptures and of giving to this study a direction more in conformity with the needs of our own time. The Apostolic office which we hold calls upon us, and even constrains us, not only to lay open, more safely and more abundantly, for the benefit of the Christian people, the precious source of Catholic revelation, but also to prevent it from being in any way tampered with, either by those who, boldly impious, openly attack the Holy Scripture, or by those who bring in imprudent and erroneous innovations. We are not ignorant, indeed, Venerable Brethren, that a certain number of Catholics, men of science and ability, do devote themselves with ardour to the defence of the Sacred Books, or to the work of making them more widely known and understood. But, whilst we give due meed of praise to their labours and their success, we cannot

but exhort other scholars to follow in the same path and to merit the same praise. We speak of men whose talent, science, and piety would give ground for hope of magnificent results. It is our ardent desire that a greater number of faithful Catholics should undertake the right defence of the Sacred Writings, and serve that cause with devotedness and constancy. Most of all do we desire that those who, by God's grace, have received Holy Orders should become every day more full of zeal in reading, meditating, and explaining the Scriptures; for nothing better becomes the sacred state to which they have been called. Besides the excellence of this sacred science, and the obedience due to God's own word, we have another particular motive for recommending the study of the Holy Books. We mean the many advantages which flow therefrom, as the Holy Spirit Himself bears testimony: "All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work." It was with such intention God gave man the Scriptures, as we see by the example of Our Lord and His Apostles. Christ Himself, Who "obtained authority by His miracles, induced faith by His authority, and won over the multitudes by His faith," was accustomed to appeal to the Holy Scriptures in witness of His Divine mission. He makes use of Scripture to show that He comes from God and is Himself God. From Scripture He borrows arguments for the instruction of His Disciples and the confirmation of His doctrine. He invokes Scripture testimonies against the calumnies of His enemies. He brings it for answer to Sadducees and Pharisees. He turns it against Satan himself, when the evil spirit audaciously quotes it. And once more, at the close of His life, and after His resurrection, Our Lord makes use of the Sacred Scriptures, and expounds them to His Disciples until the day when He ascends to the glory of His Father.

THE APOSTLES AND THE BIBLE.

The Apostles followed the words and instructions of their Master. Although He Himself had granted unto them that miraculous signs and wonders should be done by their hands, nevertheless the Apostles made great use of the Holy Books in spreading Christian wisdom abroad amongst the nations, in overcoming the obstinate unbelief of the Jews, and in putting down new-fangled heretical teaching. The evidence of these things is found in their discourses, and especially in those of St. Peter. These discourses were almost made up of the words of the Old Testament, as being the strongest support of the New Dispensation. Evidence to the same effect is in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John, and in the Catholic Epistles, and especially in the testimony of him who, in the presence of Gamaliel, made it his glory that he had studied the law of Moses and the Prophets, to the end that, being furnished with spiritual arms, he might be able to say with confidence "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but the power of God."

THE TEACHERS TAUGHT.

Let all, then, understand, and in particular the soldiers of the army of the Lord, what esteem they ought to have for Holy Scripture, and with what zeal and respect they ought to bask themselves to this sacred armoury, in imitation of Christ and His Apostles. Nowhere else will those who impart Catholic truth, either to the learned or unlearned—nowhere else will they find more ample teaching concerning God, the supreme of all-perfect good, and the works which manifest His glory and His love for men. Regarding the Saviour of mankind, no written words are more fruitful and touching than those which are

found throughout the Bible, and St. Jerome rightly declares that "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." In the Scriptures we look upon the living image of the Son of God, that slight admirably soothes all sufferings, exhorts to virtue, and invites to the love of God. For the Church of Christ, her institutions, her notes, her mission, her gifts, so many and convincing are the arguments found in the Bible that the same St. Jerome has truly said: "He who is firmly founded upon the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures is a bulwark of the Church." If men of Apostolic desires are in search of precepts of morals and of the conduct of life, they shall find in the Bible commandments full of sanctity, exhortations as powerful as they are gentle, examples of all kinds of virtue, promises of everlasting recompense, warnings of suffering in the world to come—promises and warning made in the Name of God and sanctioned by His Word. This virtue of the Divine breath, which belongs to Scripture, it is that gives authority to the Scripture, that inspires him with Apostolic liberty of speech, and gives him eloquence, vigorous and convincing. Whosoever has in his words the spirit and power of the Divine Writings will speak, not by language alone, but by virtue and by the Holy Ghost, and will speak fruitfully. Unskilful and improvident are those preachers who speak of religion, and who preach its Divine precepts, almost without the invocation of any knowledge or any authority except such as are merely human, and with a dependence upon their own arguments rather than upon God's. Their eloquence may be brilliant, but it must be languid, it must be cold, inasmuch as it is deprived of the fire of the Word of God, and inasmuch as it is empty of the virtue shining in the Divine phrase that tells us that the Word of God is stronger and sharper than a two-edged sword, and that it divideth soul and spirit. The learned must needs perceive that the Holy Scriptures are rich in a wonderfully varied eloquence. St. Augustine knew it and it is part of the experience of every sacred speaker. Each of these has owed his own glory to assiduous study and meditation of the Bible, and all have manifested their gratitude therefor to God. Knowing these riches through and through, and using them largely, the Fathers did not measure their praises of the Holy Scriptures and of the things that are to be gathered therefrom. In many a passage of their works they call the Holy Books a precious treasure of celestial doctrine, the eternal sources of salvation, they compare them to fertile fields, the delightful gardens wherein the flocks of the Lord find pasture strong and sweet. Just, indeed, were the words of St. Jerome to the clerk Nepotian: "Read often the Holy Scriptures; nay, never lay down that book, learn that which thou art to teach; let the words of the preacher rest upon the reading of the Scriptures." In the same sense is the saying of St. Gregory the Great, who, more excellently than any other, has traced out the duties of pastors of the Church. "It is needful," he says, "that all men who undertake the ministry of preaching should not cease from studying the Holy Books."

THE SPIRIT OF THE WORD.

Here, moreover, we will recall the advice of St. Augustine: "He shall not be a true preacher of the Word of God outwardly who shall not listen to it within his own soul." St. Gregory also counsels sacred authors that before they carry the Divine Word to others they shall examine themselves, and shall not in the service of others neglect themselves. Indeed, this truth had been ably illustrated by the words and the example of Christ, Who began at once to act and to

teach; the voice of the Apostle also proclaimed it, addressing not only Timothy, but the whole clerical Order with the precept that each one should watch over himself and his doctrine with all care, so that the speaker and hearer might be all saved together. Assuredly shall we find, or our own sanctification and for that of others, most precious help in the Holy Scriptures. Abundant is it especially in the Psalms. And those only will find it who shall bring to the study of the Divine Word not only a docile and attentive spirit, but also a perfect good will and a great piety. These books, in fact, dictated by the Holy Spirit Himself, hold the most vital truths, hidden, doubtless, and difficult to interpret upon many points. For understanding and for explaining these we must always need the presence of this same Spirit—that is to say, His light and His grace, which, as the Psalms constantly teach us, must be implored by human prayer joined by a holy life. In this appears prominently the foresight of the Church. In order that this treasure of the Sacred Writings, the gift of the Holy Spirit to mankind, so freely given, should not be neglected, she has in all times multiplied her precepts and her works. Not only has she proscribed that a great part of Scripture should be daily read by her ministers in the course of her services, but she has also ordered that this Scripture should be expounded and interpreted by men of learning in her Cathedrals, her Convents, and in Monasteries of the regular Orders, where study is fostered. She has commanded that on Sundays and Festivals the people should be fed with the wholesome food of Scripture. Thus, thanks to the wisdom and vigilance of Holy Church, the study of the Bible goes on, flourishes, and is fruitful for salvation.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Grand Duke of Baden a Convert.

Few people will be astonished in Germany if the announcement that the Grand Duke of Baden has become converted to the Roman Catholic church proves to be correct. Notwithstanding the fact that he has hitherto figured as one of the principal supporters of the Lutheran church, it is no secret that both the grand duchess and himself have long shown a marked inclination for the Roman Catholic form of worship. They are both known to have been in entire accord, as far as matters of faith are concerned, with the duchess' mother, the late Empress Augusta, who is popularly believed and reported to have become a convert to the Church of Rome just before her death.

The belief has been strengthened by several remarks which have been made by the pope and by members of his entourage, and it was but recently that in receiving Count Kaunitz, who is one of the great feudal magnates of Prussia, that Leo XIII went out of his way to specially dwell on his regard and affection for the Grand Duchess of Baden and her husband.

There have been a number of conversions from Protestantism to Catholicism in the royal house of Prussia during the last decade, and among the most notable members who have thus gone over are the late queen mother of Bavaria, who was a Prussian princess, and Princess Frederick Charles, the widow of the famous Prussian cavalry leader who used to be known by the name of the Red Prince.—*Marquise de Fontenay*.

During the past half-century—since the discovery of Ayer's Sarsaparilla—the average limit of human life in civilized countries, has been considerably lengthened. Ayer's sarsaparilla is everywhere considered the standard blood purifier, the Superior Medicine.

The death of Mr. John Whitford, T.C., Templeshannon, Enniscorthy, took place on Nov. 26.