

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.

CLXXXVIII.

My knowledge of Portuguese is very slight, almost at zero, but unhappily the spirit of calumnious ignorance which has marked the Presbyterian church in publishing that malicious and ridiculous little book "Almost a Nun," is so transparently visible in the Presbyterian organ of Brazil, O Estadante, that its malignant comments on the case of Joan of Arc can easily be made out by me from begging to end.

They are as follows: Joan of Arc, in 1431, was tried by the bishop of Beauvais, presiding over a number of assessors, including the vicar of the Dominican Inquisition, as a heretic and sorceress. She was condemned, and burnt alive at Rouen. This was done during the reign and under the authorization of Pope Eugenius IV.

In the late pontificate, an attempt was made to reverse this sentence, and even to canonize the Maid, but was repelled by Pius IX., who would not admit that his predecessor could have fallen into such an error as to burn a saint for a sorceress.

Now, however, Leo XIII. is about to canonize her in fact. To what a mockery, then, is papal infallibility reduced!

Now, has this Presbyterian editor ever read the Vatican decree concerning infallibility? He can not be excused from knowing it, for even the Rev. Isaac J. Lansing, that incarnation of illiterate shallowness, has not excused himself from knowing it, but in his book has given, not indeed the whole Bull, but the definition, in a perfectly accurate translation, borrowed, of course, since we must not make fun of Mr. Lansing by gravely treating him as if we thought him capable of translating even these few lines of ecclesiastical Latin for himself. The poor man, in trying to put down two words of particularly nasty Latin, as of course gets one of them wrong. So too we will not insist that this transplanted American editor in Brazil should be able to translate the definition, but certainly it would be as easy for him as for Mr. Lansing to get hold of a copy of it, rendered into English, or into Portuguese. If he complains that a true Presbyterian conscience must not dabble itself with the knowledge of such pernicious documents, let us admonish him that in that case it must not further defile itself by attempts to misinterpret them.

Let us suppose now that he has finally, with many qualms, by the help of a friend who knows Church Latin, read through the Bull, introduction and all. He will find that it confines the claim of infallibility for the Pope to "doctrines concerning faith or morals." Now of which is Joan of Arc a doctrine, of faith, or of morals? She was a noble exemplar of high morality, indeed, but this does not transform her into a doctrine. Scholarship has not yet got so far down towards our date as even to evaporate her into a lunar heroine. No, a woman she was, and a woman, in memory, she remains. Now Catholic theology teaches that the Church has no infallible knowledge of personal worth, or unworthiness. Were it true, then, which it is not, that Eugenius IV. sanctioned her murder, it would not have the slightest bearing on the question of his doctrinal infallibility. St. John shows us Caiaphas as the conscious and intending murderer of the Redeemer, yet he none the less ascribes to him, as high priest, an official gift of prophecy.

It was, in fact, a Pope who instigated the death of Savonarola. Yet so far was Alexander from imagining that his doctrinal infallibility was concerned in maintaining his condemnation of the Frate as a rebel and heretic, that he freely allowed Girolamo's disciples to invoke the intercession of their master as a prophet and martyr. And when Pius IV., some seventy years later, rehabilitated the Friar's memory, no one imagined that the act had the remotest bearing on the authority of a former Pope's teachings.

Furthermore, the decree declares that the Pope can proclaim no new doctrine, but only one involved in the apostolic revelation. Of course then as the saintliness of Elizabeth, and Mary Magdalene, and Salome, and Joanna, and Priscilla, and other female disciples of the Lord and the apostles, is plainly implied in the apostolic revelation, the Pope could condemn of heresy any one who should dispute the religious eminence of these holy women. But the saintliness of Joan of Arc is no part of the apostolic revelation, which does not even foresee her existence. It is a fact, about which a Pope might think or wrong like any other man, so long as he was not called to enter into a particular investigation of it. Though it is not of faith, the almost unanimous opinion in the Church is, that the Pope is never suffered to canonize an unworthy person; yet no one imagines that his provisional judgments of character are infallible.

Note the dishonest use of the phrase "the Pope's authorization." In a sense, of course, Joan was condemned under the authorization of Eugenius. He had commissioned the episcopal and inquisitorial courts everywhere to try charges of heresy and witchcraft. So likewise President Roosevelt appoints judges in the Philippines to try cases of treason and murder. Suppose now that a Filipino were tried and condemned and hanged as guilty of both crimes. In a sense, of course, this would be under

Mr. Roosevelt's authorization, for the President could, if he would, direct the entering of a *notte prosequi*. But what possible motive could he have, in any ordinary case, for interfering? None whatever.

Suppose now, twenty-five years later, some particular reason had induced our government to re-examine the case of this hypothetical Filipino, and that it then came to light that not only was he guilty of no crime, but that he had been done to death by his neighbors out of envy of his eminent virtues, and that the American judge had knowingly lent himself to the conspiracy! Of course all this would come as a terrible shock on the President of the time, but would not lead him to ensure his nearer predecessors, or Mr. Roosevelt, who was probably never much as has heard of the man's existence.

The case of Eugenius IV. is exactly parallel. It is more than doubtful whether he ever so much as knew that there was a Joan of Arc. If he knew it at all, he barely knew that in northern France a peasant girl had suddenly roused the courage of the French to tremendous and successful pitch; that the French held her for a saint and the English for a witch; that at last she had fallen into English hands, had been tried, condemned and given over to the secular arm. What was there to persuade him to interfere? So far as he knew, everything had been done in due order, by the appointed judges. The Pope had always refrained from the officiousness of an interference in the quarrel between the two crowns, beyond, I suppose, an offer of friendly mediation. For all the Pope knew, the peasant girl might really have been a witch. Of course, he owned that God might raise up a saint and prophetess on the side of France, but Eugenius knew of no antecedent probability of this. He therefore did what every wise man, who does not pretend to omniscience, would do, he accepted the sentence of the constituted authorities in a remote and complicated case so long as he knew of no reason for disputing it.

One thing Eugenius did not know, or he might have been moved to immediate action. He did not know that the Maid had, in all form, lodged an appeal to Rome, and that the court had tyrannically denied her this right, thus adding rebellion to the murder of the saint. Therefore even my provisional concession that Joan in a manner died by the Pope's authority, must be revoked. She did not in any manner die under Papal authority, but was murdered in defiance of it. Andrew Lang points this out.

Twenty-five years later, Rome, then first moved to concern herself with a matter about which the ungrateful French had shown themselves perfectly indifferent, was at last requested by the worthless Charles VII. to re-examine the case. She did so, and after hearing everything, pronounced that the Maid of Orleans "had been a holy woman; that her inspirations were of God; and that the sentence against her had been calumnious and void."

See then the malignant falsehood of this Presbyterian editor's sentence. Rome, against whose supreme rights the murder of Joan had been perpetrated, has now for four hundred and forty-six years held her in the catalogue of un-blessed but saintly servants of God, and when at last, after ages of astounding indifference, Catholic France has been moved to ask for her canonization, the Holy See at once proceeds rapidly forward in it!

To what an apostolate of religious slander O Estadante has lent itself!

CHARLES C. STARRBUCK, Andover, Mass.

THE ENDING OF THE EASTER TIME.

In a short time the season appointed in a special manner by the Church for showing in a practical way the faith that is in us will be at an end. As all members of the Catholic Church know, every Catholic who has attained the age of reason is bound to receive Holy Communion once a year. And the time of year within which he is bound to communicate is, generally speaking, between Ash-Wednesday and Trinity Sunday. It is all important for every Catholic to observe this ecclesiastical law. It is true Christ said the Father must be worshipped in spirit and in secret, and very often the sincerest prayers that come from the human heart are the prayers that are formed in silence, without moving the lips, without moving from the quietness of one's own room; but there is a time also when public prayer is necessary, when it is necessary to enter into a church to pray and to receive the sacraments, not because public prayer is more holy, but because the world should know that we pray, but because we need the graces to be obtained through the sacraments as well as those to be obtained through prayer. When we look around us and stare the world in the face, we cannot but admit that men are more and more putting religion in the background, and that very many who have not quite lost their faith, still are secretly ashamed of it. The dread of being considered superstitious because they practice their religion is upon many. It is simply the effect that everything around tends to produce, and it is hard to get away from what seems to be in the air we breathe. And yet no matter what the popular impression may be, and no matter whether the popular tendency may be drifting, religion is a fact in life just as surely as are the unseen but mighty forces of nature. And not only is it a fact in life, but it is the only basis on which we may hope for the salvation of the world. In order that it may produce its beneficent effects it must be shown in public, and the way to show it in public is by praying sincerely and devoutly in church, and by observing publicly the great law of the Church as regards the reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist.—New World.

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FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Pentecost, or Whitsunday.

HOW TO PURIFY OUR SOULS.

"There appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them." (Acts II, 3.)

Ten days ago, my dear brethren, we celebrated the feast of the glorious Ascension of Our Lord into heaven; at that time He departed from the midst of the Apostles, leaving them, to all appearances, in rather a sad and perplexed condition as to their future mission; but not so, for though He, their guide and chief Pastor and Teacher, had gone from amongst them, yet before doing so He had promised in His place another Comforter in the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Blessed Trinity: "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My Name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you."

This sending down of the Holy Ghost, His descent upon the Apostles and the other believers, we are celebrating to-day, the Feast of Pentecost. "And when the days of Pentecost were accomplished they were altogether in one place; and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them; and they were all filled with Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak."

You have noticed, in these words of to-day's epistle, that the Holy Ghost came in the form of tongues of fire; now, as one of the principal properties of fire is to purify, we may naturally conclude that the Apostles were from that time purified from their former imperfections and defects. Concerning these faults of the Apostles we read that they were easily excited and gave way to feelings of revenge. Speaking of the Samaritans they say: "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" And turning Our Lord rebuked them, saying: "You know not of what spirit you are."

The Apostles were ambitious, they sought precedence and distinction, and Our Lord again rebuked them by placing a child in the midst of them, saying at the same time: "Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Lastly, we all know of the threefold denial by Peter of his Divine Lord and Master. Such, my dear brethren, was the condition of the Apostles before the descent of the Holy Ghost; they were filled with the faults and imperfections of human nature, and remained so after the Ascension of Our Lord, and hence the reason of their fear and sad condition.

But the time has now come for their purification, and the fire, the grace of the Holy Ghost, performed a wonderful change in the followers of Our Lord, for just as in nature fire purifies the iron, consumes the rust, and renders all things bright, and by fire only can these results be obtained, so also the grace of the Holy Ghost, the fire of Divine love, penetrates the hearts of the Apostles, changes them from proud, ambitious men, to men full of humility, of meekness, and of love; so that henceforth all worldly desires were banished for ever from their souls, and their aspirations were directed with ceaseless zeal to things heavenly; such are the workings of Divine love in man's soul.

From all this we clearly see the condition of the Apostles before and after the Descent of the Holy Ghost, and what a marvellous effect the grace and fire of the Divine love of God had on their souls; now, if such was the case of the Apostles, may we not hope for and obtain the same favor from our Heavenly Father? Surely we can if we but pray for it, and pray earnestly and patiently with entire trust in the goodness of God, that the Paraclete may descend into our souls and abide with us for ever.

Convert Priest.

Last month, at Port Angeles, Washington, Rev. Otto H. Weitzer, for twelve years in charge of the Angelus Lutheran Church, became a convert to the Catholic Church. He is now beginning his studies for the priesthood. Rev. Weitzer is a most scholarly man, speaking a number of languages, and has traveled a great deal.

THOUGHTS FOR MAY.

It is well to remember that the custom of dedicating this month to the Queen of Heaven was inaugurated by a pious Carmelite nun in France. More devotions than this beautiful one have been born within the cloister.

Now is the time to offer your gifts to Mary. Gather a bouquet as it were. Let it consist of all the virtues,—the lily of purity, the violet of penance and, above all, the rose of love,—and your heavenly mother will weave for you a bouquet of forget-me-nots when she beholds your May flowers blooming.

"Fragrant, filling the air with a Strange and wonderful sweetness."

Sophonius gives us a beautiful thought for May. He tells us that "Mary is the true garden of pleasure, abounding in the sweetest flowers, and she emits the celestial odor of all the virtues."

Three hundred days' Indulgence can be gained by those who assist at the May devotions in church. At home, too, you can gain many indulgences by having devotions with your family.—Carmelite Review.

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OUR LADY'S MONTH.

The May is once more with us, bright with the promise of summer, radiant in its vernal raiment. Its sweet influence is felt all over the face of Nature, and subtly penetrates the human heart as well. How inexpressibly beautiful to the devout Catholic is this glad season, linked as it is with the name and the cause of our Blessed Lady! As the budding flowers of the garden begin to tender their countless delicious perfumes to heaven, so rise the heartfelt aspirations of devout souls everywhere to the sweet Mother of God—of Him the Author of all beauty, the Inspirer of all devotion.

Children, flowers, prayers—these are the external evidences of Mary's Month in all lands which own her name. What more emblematic of all she represents—innocence, sweetness, love of God? Material loveliness is linked with spiritual loveliness, and as the perfume floats up before the Celestial Throne, she who embodied them all and expressed them all in the canticle of the "Magnificat" will prefer them to Him who can refuse her nothing which she craves. We need those precious offerings to-day as we never needed them before. The enemies of our Holy Father and her Divine Son are everywhere about us. They lurk in places never dreamed of before. They meet our gaze with their bold eyes in the pages of almost every book we open. They are heard preaching their infidel doctrine in almost every lecture hall. They stare us in the face, with their leering eye of evil, from every doorway.

But Mary's Rosary is a potent armament. Before it went down the might of the Moslem. It has crushed the head of schism and heresy in the past, and it is powerful to do so again. We need its help to-day as in the days when the Crescent sought to overthrow the Cross. As our Holy Father has consecrated the twentieth century to her Divine Son, simultaneously, it would seem, the powers of darkness have moved to thwart that dedication and let loose all the forces of infidelity, blasphemy and destruction against His Spouse on earth, the Church of His authority and His law.

May is an especial festival month of the Church, besides being Mary's especial month. Two great feasts occur in it—the festival of the Ascension, on the eighth day, and that of Pentecost ten days later. There is yet another feast, more honored still in other lands—that of Corpus Christi, eleven days still later. In May, therefore, all our churches should be thronged, for the love of Mary and her Rosary, because this means the love of Him Whom she bore to us, to be our savior and salvation.—Catholic Standard and Times.

Her Wonderful Love.

Says The Messenger of the Sacred Heart: "Confidence in the Mother of God implies a disposition to make known to her the most secret needs and wishes of our hearts, to invoke her aid, to obtain the favor of her powerful intercession. It is the highest expression of our filial love for her to whom we become united by our brotherhood with Jesus Christ. She loves us with a tenderness no words can express, with a love that is not less for each one personally because our number is multiplied, and her love is so constant that neither time nor absence, nor our own indifference or ingratitude can turn her from us. She is all-powerful with God, 'full of grace,' worthy of every divine favor, and consequently able to prove her love by obtaining for us from Him His choicest gifts."

The Queen of All.

Great as are the virtues attributed by the Church to the holy confessors, some of them she would not think of mentioning about Mary, as though her great perfections began where those of the saints ended. As she surpassed them all, so she surpassed them in the paradise of God she flourishes more fairly than they, in honor and grace, clad about with variety and enthroned above them in glory next the King. How gladly they acknowledge her sway, we may gather from the unstinted praise they gave her during their lives, from the heroic apologies of St. John Damascene, the eloquent tributes of St. Augustine, the tender outpourings of St. Bernard, the absorbing meditations of St. Bonaventure, and the filial devotion of her beautiful sons, Stanislaus, Aloysius and Berchmans.

Mary is Queen of Confessors, as Christ is their King. Oh, come, let us worship the Queen with the King! Mary will make our worship more sincere, by making it a constant confession of the King's excellence, and of our need of His goodness.

Children and the Rosary.

Children should be taught their Rosary from their tenderest years and they should be frequently reminded of the blessings attending its daily recital. There is at least one class of persons who who have pledged themselves to propagate the Rosary. We mean the Promoters of the League of the Sacred Heart. This is a part of their mission. The recitation of a decade of the Rosary is the distinctive practice of the second degree of the League. It is the duty and the privilege of Promoters to swell the ranks of those who are enrolling themselves under the standard of the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary to do battle against the enemies of God's Church. Every accession to the ranks is a gain to the great cause. May we not hope that the present month of May will see a large increase in the number of these special clients of our Lady?

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