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ART. III.—POPE LEO XIII. ON THE STUDY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

THE Encyclical Letter of Pope Leo XIII. on the Study of Holy Scripture, issued in 1893, to the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Communion, is a document fraught with important consequences to the claims of the Christian religion. Its chief purpose is, no doubt, to confirm the faith of the educated and thoughtful lay members of the Roman Church, whose minds may have been disturbed by the Rationalists and “the peremptory pronouncements of a certain newly-invented free science,” in reference to the Divine Scriptures. These faithful souls were under the impression that their religion would be held and maintained independently of any book. “We believe and know,” writes one of their prominent exponents, “that our holy religion, not being founded upon Biblical records, has nothing to fear from Biblical criticism.”<sup>1</sup> They appealed accordingly, and very properly, to their infallible head for an authoritative declaration upon this important question, forgetting, however, that the matter had already been definitely decided at the Council of Trent. They have received their answer in the Encyclical Letter, and a quiet snubbing in addition in being reminded that “the Church has never required, nor does she now require, any stimulation from without” for “the protection and glory of God’s Holy Word.” They are told in the plainest language that “the God of all Providence . . . has bestowed upon man a splendid gift and safeguard, making known to him, by supernatural means, the hidden mysteries of His Divinity, His wisdom and His mercy,” in a Divine revelation “contained both in unwritten tradition, and in written books, which are therefore called sacred and canonical because, being written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their Author.” They are reminded that Holy Scripture is “the source” of innumerable benefits—“profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect; furnished to every good work.” Their attention is drawn to the fact that the Founder of the Church “appealed to the Scriptures”—“this grand source of Catholic revelation”—to prove “His Divine mission” and character. “From them He cites instructions for His disciples and confirmation of His doctrine. . . . At the close of His life His utterances are from Holy Scripture, and it is the Scripture that He expounds to His disciples after His resurrection, until He ascends to the glory of His Father. Faithful to His pre-

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Review*, April, 1893: “The Pope and the Bible.”

cepts, the Apostles . . . used with the greatest effect the sacred writings, in order to persuade the nations everywhere of the wisdom of Christianity, to conquer the obstinacy of the Jews, and to suppress the outbreak of heresy."

In the face of these declarations the members of the Roman Church must see that their faith is dependent on the truths contained in the Divine books, and that their religion is founded upon the supernatural revelation expressed in the canonical Scriptures, as God's "own oracles and words—a Letter written by our Heavenly Father, and transmitted by the sacred writers to the human race in its pilgrimage so far from its heavenly country."<sup>1</sup>

Whether the answer of the Papacy will prove satisfactory or not to those who have appealed to it remains to be seen; but to those outside the pale of the Roman fold—the inheritors of the principles of the Reformation—this Encyclical Letter, as far as its general aim is concerned, affords considerable gratification. Hitherto the latter have been under the impression that the value and authority of Holy Scripture were held of very secondary importance in the Roman Church, and that consequently no encouragement was given to its study and exposition. Probably such an impression resulted from the teaching of Roman Catholic theologians, held in great repute, who say that Holy Scripture was not calculated to teach the Gospel;<sup>2</sup> that "the Scripture is a nose of wax, a dead letter which kills, truly a shell without the nut, a leaden weight, a forest to serve as a refuge for brigands, a school for heretics;"<sup>3</sup> that "the excellence of the unwritten Word surpasses by far that of the Scriptures which the Apostles have left to us written on parchment. The Scripture does not contain clearly all the mysteries of religion, because it was not given for that purpose, nor to prescribe an absolute system of faith";<sup>4</sup> that "we shall endeavour to demonstrate that the Scriptures without the traditions are neither absolutely necessary nor are they sufficient."<sup>5</sup> But these writers, it may be urged, were individuals for whose utterances the Church ought not to be held responsible; nothing is authoritative unless it has the *imprimatur* of the Holy See, or of those delegated to grant such a privilege. This explanation, on the face of it, seems fair and reasonable, but it is scarcely sufficient to show that the impression under discussion is mistaken and erroneous. Not only is evidence wanting of any reproof, or repudiation of the

<sup>1</sup> Encyclical Letter, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Tournley, "Prælect. Theol. de Eccl. Christi," tom. i., p. 281.

<sup>3</sup> Lindanus, "Panoplia," book i., c. 22; book v., c. 4; book i., c. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Coster, "Enchiridion," c. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Bellarmine, "De Verbo Dei," lib. iv., c. 4.

teachers referred to, but the Holy See itself in the past has, on more than one occasion, given proofs of entire sympathy with them. The fourth rule of the Congregation of the Index of Prohibited Books, approved by Pope Pius IV., forbids the use of translations of the Scriptures, even when made by Catholic writers, without a faculty in writing granted by the Bishop or Inquisitor. "Whosoever," it says, "shall presume to read these Bibles, or have them in possession without such faculty, shall not be capable of receiving absolution of their sins unless they have first given up the Bibles to the Ordinary. . . . Moreover, regulars may not read or purchase the same without license had from their superiors." In 1713 A.D. Pope Clement XI. condemned by the Bull *Unigenitus* numerous propositions taken from the "Moral Reflections of Paschasius Quesnel upon the Books of the New Testament, in French," Paris, 1669; and "Christian Thoughts on the Texts of the Gospels," etc., by the same writer; Paris, 1693-94. Among these propositions were the following:

(a) "It is useful and necessary, at every time, in every place, and for every kind of persons, to study and know the spirit, piety, and mysteries of Sacred Scripture.

(b) "The reading of Sacred Scripture is for all.

(c) "The Lord's Day ought to be sanctified by Christians with the readings of piety, and, above all, of the Holy Scriptures. It is damnable to wish to restrain a Christian from such reading.

(d) "To snatch the New Testament out of the hands of Christians, or to keep it closed to them, by taking from them that method of understanding it, is to shut the mouth of Christ against them.

(e) "To interdict to Christians the reading of Sacred Scriptures, especially of the Gospel, is to interdict the use of light to the sons of light, and to cause them to suffer a certain kind of excommunication."

These propositions the Bull condemned as "false, captious, ill-sounding, offensive to pious ears, scandalous, pernicious, rash, injurious to the Church and her practice, and contumelious not only to the Church, but also to the secular powers; seditious, impious, blasphemous, suspected of heresy and savouring of heresy itself, and also abetting heretics and heresies, and also schism, erroneous, near akin to heresy, several times condemned, and finally heretical." After thus exhausting the dictionary for epithets, it proceeds to threaten ecclesiastical censures against anyone who should presume to "teach, defend, publish them conjointly or separately, or treat of them publicly or privately, even by way of disputing."

Pope Leo XII. also, in an Encyclical Letter to the Latin

Bishops, dated May 3, 1824, writes: "You are aware, venerable brethren, that a certain society, called the Bible Society, strolls with effrontery throughout the world; which society, contemning the traditions of the Holy Fathers, and contrary to the well-known decree of the Council of Trent, labours with all its might, and by every means, to translate—or, rather, to pervert—the Holy Scriptures into the vulgar language of every nation; from which proceeding it is greatly to be feared that what is ascertained to have happened as to some passages may also occur with regard to others; to wit, that by a perverse interpretation the Gospel of Christ be turned into a human Gospel, or, what is still worse, the Gospel of the Devil. . . . In conformity with our Apostolic duty, we exhort you to turn away your flock, by all means, from these poisonous pastures. Reprove, beseech, be instant in season and out of season, in all patience and doctrine, that the faithful entrusted to you (adhering strictly to the rules of the Congregation of the Index) be persuaded, that if the sacred Scriptures be everywhere indiscriminately published, more evil than advantage will arise thence."

With such testimony before them—and much more might be adduced—non-Romanists have good grounds for their opinion of the low value hitherto set upon the study and use of Holy Scripture by the hierarchy of the Roman Church. The Encyclical Letter of Pope Leo XIII. comes, therefore, as an agreeable surprise. Without endorsing all that it contains, they are disposed at the outset to look upon it as a sign of important changes in the views of the Roman Curia in reference to the right place of God's Word in His Church. The high commendation bestowed upon the sacred books—a commendation supported by such patristic quotations as "an inexhaustible treasury of heavenly doctrine"; "an overflowing fountain of salvation"; "fertile pastures and beautiful gardens," etc.—the devout expressions of "gratitude to God for the communication to man of the words of His wisdom"; and the fatherly admonition "to approach the Sacred Writings with reverence and piety," are in themselves a revelation of better influences at work in the counsels of the Vatican.

Gratifying as the Letter may be to those of every denomination who retain their belief in the inspiration of the Bible, it contains, however, statements which ought not to pass unnoticed or unchallenged. Before referring to these in detail, it is necessary for the sake of clearness to distinguish the words "Church" and "Catholics," so frequently used in the document. The former word is manifestly used in the sense of the definition given by Silvester Mazzolini, called Prierias, Master of the Papal Palace under Pope Leo X., in his

reply to the theses of Luther on Indulgences, viz.: (1) The Universal Church was in its essence the assembly of all Christians; (2) virtually it was the Roman Church; (3) and the Roman Church was virtually the Pope.<sup>1</sup> Few will deny in these days this conclusion of Prierias, and therefore the "Church" in the Encyclical must be taken as a synonym for the Pope, or the particular communion of which he is the head. "Catholics" are referred to, of course, as individual, private members of the Roman obedience, for whose labours *per se* the "Church" can neither take credit nor blame.

Now, the Bible of which the Pope writes contains the Apocryphal books, and these, as well as the others, are said "to have been written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and have God for their Author." It is also stated that "this belief has been perpetually held and professed by the Church."<sup>2</sup> Such an assertion as this, in the face of the well-known history of the formation of the Canon of Holy Scripture, is astounding. St. Jerome himself, the author of the Vulgate, which is pronounced as the "authentic version," wrote: "As the Church reads the books of Judith, and Tobit, and Maccabees, but does not receive them among the canonical Scriptures, so also it reads Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus for the edification of the people, not for the authoritative confirmation of doctrine."<sup>3</sup>

Pope Gregory the Great apologized for quoting a passage from 1 Maccabees on the ground that the book was "put forth for the edification of the Church, though it was not canonical."<sup>4</sup> From those early days down to the Council of Trent a continuous succession of the most learned theologians in the Western Church maintained the distinction between the canonical books and those for ecclesiastical use. The list of these distinguished men closes with the names of Cardinal Ximenes, Sixtus Senensis, and Cardinal Cajetan.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore a fact beyond all question that, until the middle of the sixteenth century, the authoritative contents of the Bible were not matters of faith in the Latin Church. The Trentine Fathers, in a session comprising only about fifty-three representatives, among whom there was not one scholar distinguished for historical learning or special study of the subject, decreed, for the first time in Christian history, that the Apocryphal books were of "equal veneration" with the rest, and "as sacred and canonical." From this date only did

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Creighton's "History of the Papacy," vol. v., p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclical Letter, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> "Pref. ad Libros Sol."

<sup>4</sup> In Tob. xix. 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Vide* Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," vol. i., p. 259.

the contents of the Bible become an absolute article of faith in the Roman Church.<sup>1</sup> Leaving out of consideration altogether the opinions of the great Fathers of the Eastern Church, it may be fairly asked, With what propriety can Pope Leo XIII. say that the belief in the inspiration of the Bible—as, of course, formulated at Trent—has “been perpetually held and professed by the Church”? Students of history will be glad to know when this profession of faith was made by the “Church” prior to the sixteenth century.

Exception may be justly taken also on historical grounds to the credit claimed in this Letter on behalf of the “Church” for her solicitous care of the Bible, her continuous encouragement of its study, and her desire to feed the flock from its saving words. It is enough to take one’s breath away to read such assertions as the following: “By admirable laws and regulations, she [the Church] has always shown herself solicitous that the celestial treasure of the Sacred Books . . . should not lie neglected.” “She has strictly commanded that her children shall be fed with the saving words of the Gospel at least on Sundays and solemn feasts. Moreover, it is owing to the wisdom and exertions of the Church that there has always been continued from century to century that cultivation of Holy Scripture which has been so remarkable and has borne such ample fruit.”<sup>2</sup>

All this is a new revelation to readers of ecclesiastical history. The records of nearly sixteen centuries of the Christian era are blank with regard to any particular “solicitous care of the Bible” shown by the Roman Church. From her claim to be regarded as “the Mother of all Churches,” it might have been taken, as a matter of course, that she would have been the first to take measures for the formation of the Canon of Holy Scripture, and thus show how jealously she guarded such a Divine treasure. But she cannot claim this credit. The first attempt to form a Canon of the Bible for Christian use was made at a small gathering of clergy from parts of Lydia and Phrygia, held at Laodicea about 363 A.D.<sup>3</sup> This example was followed at the Council of Carthage, 397 A.D., and to the decree passed on that occasion was appended the following note: “Let the transpontine [Roman] Church be consulted about the formation of that Canon.” This action of the North African Bishops seems to have had little effect at Rome. The desired confirmation does not appear to have been obtained, neither were any steps taken to give to the

<sup>1</sup> Westcott, “The Bible in the Church,” p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclical Letter, pp. 8, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Westcott’s “Bible in the Church,” p. 170.

Church in Italy what these two provincial Synods thought most necessary. So important was the question felt to be by the North African Christians that another Council at Carthage, in 419 A.D., discussed the subject again, and renewed the decree of its predecessor. Again a note was added: "Let this also be notified to our brother and fellow-priest Boniface, Bishop of Rome, or to other Bishops of those parts, for the purpose of confirming that Canon."<sup>1</sup> Rome apparently remained indifferent to these conciliar reminders. No "stimulation from without" could move her to follow the example of the Synods of Laodicea and Carthage, and she did nothing to *define* the contents of the Holy Book until the Council of Trent.

What has the Roman Church done, it may be asked, to preserve the versions of the Bible from textual corruption? Until the time of Pope Sixtus V., at the end of the sixteenth century, she did absolutely nothing to vindicate the statement of the Encyclical Letter, that "she has ever held fast and exercised profitably that guardianship conferred upon her by Almighty God *for the protection* and glory of His Holy Word."<sup>2</sup> From the days of St. Jerome three different Bibles circulated in the West, of which no one had paramount authority.<sup>3</sup> Jerome's improved version finally succeeded in displacing its competitors on its own merits, without any direct ecclesiastical authority; but the long contest with its rivals necessarily led to great corruptions of the text. Mixed texts were formed according to the taste or judgment of scribes, and the confusion was further increased by the changes which were sometimes introduced by those who had some knowledge of Greek.<sup>4</sup> Individual scholars, like Cassiodorus, were sensible of the growing corruption, and did what they could to check it; but private labour in those days was of little avail. Charlemagne eventually took the matter up, and entrusted the task of revising the Latin text to Alcuin. Into this revision errors gradually crept, and later attempts at correction were made by Lanfranc of Canterbury, and others. Individual schoolmen, especially in France, began in the thirteenth century to draw up the *Correctoria Biblica*. If there was a time in the history of the Papacy when the Curia could reasonably be expected to do something to amend the Vulgate text, it was in the days of Pope Leo X., when the Renaissance was in its full vigour. That Pontiff attracted to

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<sup>1</sup> Westcott's "Bible in the Church," p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclical Letter, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Westcott's "Bible in the Church," p. 190.

<sup>4</sup> Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," vol. iii., p. 1703.



Rome from all quarters men distinguished in art, poetry, philosophy, and scholarship, so that it might be the capital of the world in everything pertaining to culture as well as religion. Pagan literature received the smiles of his patronage. A Greek printing-press was introduced, and valuable libraries established. Scholars produced editions of Plato, Pindar, Theocritus, Tacitus, Annotations on Homer and Sophocles, and were rewarded with lavish bounty from the Vatican treasury; but not one of these, or any one of the scores of learned professors maintained at the Gymnasium, was encouraged to do anything for the correction of the Vulgate. This indifference to the claims of the guardianship of the Bible is all the more amazing from the fact that pious and learned men elsewhere, especially in Germany—as John of Goch, John of Wesel, Gregory of Heimburg—had long drawn the attention of the Church to the paramount importance of Scriptural study and emendation.<sup>1</sup>

The warning voice of the Reformation, its appeal to the Bible as the only rule of faith, failed to impress upon the Papacy the urgent duty of providing a standard version of the Sacred Book. It is true that individuals here and there made attempts to produce improved editions of the Sacred Text, but these private and independent efforts made confusion more confounded. Perhaps no better illustration can be given of the almost hopeless character of this task than the attempt made by Isidorus Clarius, Bishop of Foligno in Umbria. He printed a revision of the Vulgate in 1542, which contained more than *eight thousand* corrections. In his Preface he says that “he did not correct all, because, if he would have corrected every passage in his version scrupulously and exactly by the Text, he might have given offence to Catholick ears.”<sup>2</sup> This honest confession of his did offend “Catholick ears,” for his version was forthwith placed upon the Index. Eventually the prohibition was withdrawn on condition of excluding the Preface and Prolegomena.

The first attempt on the part of “the Head of the Church” to give to his people an authoritative version of the Vulgate was that of Sixtus V., in 1590. Though the credit of such an effort is rightly due to him, he cannot be said to have “exercised profitably the guardianship . . . for the protection and glory of God’s Holy Word.” His corrections were arbitrary, and in many respects in defiance of those who had been employed to report upon the text. Bellarmine complained that the Church had never incurred a greater danger

<sup>1</sup> Ullman’s “Reformers before the Reformation.”

<sup>2</sup> Du Pin, “Eccles. Hist.,” vol. iii., p. 699.

on account of these alterations.<sup>1</sup> When Clement VIII. succeeded to the Papal chair two years later, the Vulgate again underwent a revision in which more than *two thousand* corrections were made. To this edition a Preface was added from the pen of Bellarmine, acknowledging that there were wrong readings left unchanged in it to avoid giving popular offence, and aiming to save the honour of Pope Sixtus by an excuse which had no foundation in fact.<sup>2</sup> Such are "the celebrated editions of the Vulgate" which Pope Leo XIII. now "recalls (to recollection) with pleasure"; witnesses of "the solicitude of the Apostolic office . . . not to suffer any attempt to defile or corrupt" "this grand source of Catholic revelation."<sup>3</sup>

The present Pontiff may be credited with the laudable desire to make the Bible "abundantly accessible to the flock of Jesus Christ," but this has not been the characteristic of the Apostolic office since the days of Pope Gregory IX. That Pope declared: "The not knowing the Scriptures by the testimony of Truth itself is the occasion of errors, and therefore, it is expedient for all men to read or hear them."<sup>4</sup> For many centuries past the fact is patent that the free circulation of the Scriptures in the vernacular has been disallowed, or so restricted as practically to make them inaccessible to "the flock." Proofs have already been given in this article in support of this statement. No better illustration of its truth could be furnished than a paper in the *Contemporary Review*, May, 1888, entitled "The Power behind the Pope." The writer described the noble attempt of a devout French Roman Catholic, M. Henri Lasserre, to publish an edition of the Gospels for the benefit of his countrymen, to whom, he says, "the Gospel, the most illustrious book in the world, is become an unknown book." Lasserre's enterprise, completed in 1886, received the *imprimatur* of the Archbishop of Paris, and the approval and benediction of Pope Leo XIII. Its success was wonderful, twenty-five editions in the space of twelve months, thus showing the eagerness of the people for Scriptural knowledge. Then, after a year's circulation, the Sacred Congregation placed this book upon the Index, and the same Pope who, twelve months before, sent "from the bottom of his heart his Apostolic benediction" to its author, prohibited it to be

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<sup>1</sup> Bellarmine to Clement VIII.: "Novit beatitudo vestra cui se totamque ecclesiam discrimini commiserit Sixtus V. dum *juncta proprie doctrinæ sensus* sacrorum biblicorum emendationem aggressus est: nec satis scio an gravius unquam periculum occurrerit" (Van Ess., p. 290).

<sup>2</sup> Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," vol. iii., p. 1707.

<sup>3</sup> Encyclical Letter, pp. 4 and 11.

<sup>4</sup> Epist. ad Germ. Archiep. Constant. apud M. Paris.

published, read or retained under pain of anathema. How strange this decree, bearing date December 20, 1887, appears side by side with the professions of the Encyclical Letter, November 18, 1893. Who can reconcile their glaring and astounding contradictions?

Here, in Great Britain, where the Bible is so well known, it is both impracticable and impolitic to exercise the restrictions placed upon the vernacular use of the Sacred Book in Continental Roman Catholic countries, and so with us Romanists benefit in some degree from their environment. Their Scriptural fare, however, in the public services of the Church is of a very meagre kind indeed. "The saving words of the Gospel," with which they are commanded to be fed on Sundays and solemn feast-days, are read at High Mass, first in Latin and then in English, but the minister is under *no obligation* to give an exposition of the same. He *may* do so, if he pleases. At Low Mass the Gospel and Epistle are said in Latin only, and such is the practice, which is said to prevail at all Masses, in purely Roman Catholic countries. Bible readings, such as obtain in the Anglican Church, are privileges utterly unknown to lay worshippers, either in this country or elsewhere. It may therefore be said without offence that under the Roman system the laity have the least possible encouragement to feed in those "fertile pastures and beautiful gardens in which the flock of the Lord is marvellously refreshed and delighted."<sup>1</sup>

And are the Roman clergy themselves much better off? They have "the sacred psalmody," it is true, in Latin in the daily office, and in the same language the Breviary lessons to be read on special occasions; but what aids have been afforded them from the seat of authority for the pursuit of Biblical studies? The reference in the Encyclical Letter to the "chairs of Oriental literature in the Roman College, etc.,"<sup>2</sup> would lead the world to suppose that some aids to a better knowledge of Holy Scripture have issued from those learned professorships. But what are the facts? In spite of the revival of Greek learning, "the happy invention of the art of printing," the introduction of a Greek press at Rome under Leo X., and the long "established chairs of Oriental literature," it was not until 1858, when Cardinal Mai published his edition of the Vatican MS., that any Greek Testament was ever printed in Rome. As to the Hebrew Bible, no edition of it has been published there yet. Equally lax has the Vatican press been in providing commentaries. Those that exist have been printed elsewhere, and they are for the most part antiquated,

<sup>1</sup> Encyclical Letter, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

costly, and fragmentary. "Apart from the large, costly, and now partly antiquated works of Cornelius à Lapide and Calmet, severally 200 and 150 years old, there are at this moment no full commentaries on the entire Bible accessible to the Roman clergy, and very few indeed on separate portions except Maldonatus and Estius, the great majority of such as do exist being German, while little is done in France, almost nothing in Italy, and quite nothing in Spain and Portugal, for Biblical study."<sup>1</sup>

The careful reader of the Encyclical may reasonably ask, Is there anything in its pages which shows that there is a desire on the part of the Pope to popularize the Bible? Is there a suggestion anywhere in it in favour of the removal of the restrictions which make the Sacred Writings comparatively unknown to the laity? An emphatic No is the only answer that can be given. Its words are addressed to the hierarchy, and are primarily intended for the clerical caste. Its directions for the study of Holy Scripture are manifestly given with a view to the preparation of candidates for the ministry, and they bear all the characteristics of a syllabus new and tentative. Even for this select and limited class the approach to Biblical study is guarded and fenced about by conditions of such a kind as to be practically prohibitive. "Care must be taken, then," says the Letter, "that beginners approach the study of the Bible well prepared and furnished. . . . The best preparation will be a conscientious application to philosophy and theology under the guidance of St. Thomas of Aquin, and a thorough training therein."<sup>2</sup> The "Angelic Doctor," therefore, is the approved key of access to the sacred pages of the Divine Word. But what this involves can only be understood by those conversant with the scholasticism of the Middle Ages. Some idea of the hopelessness of the task of "a thorough training" in such a system may be suggested from the bare fact that the Bible itself is a mere primer compared with the ponderous "Summa Theologiæ" of St. Thomas. Imagine "a beginner," desirous of slaking his thirst for Divine knowledge in "the ever-flowing fountain of salvation," conscientiously applying himself for a thorough training in the Thomist philosophy and theology! Turning to the prologue of the "Summa," as the first step in the process, he reads: "Seeing that the teacher of Catholic truth should instruct not only those advanced in knowledge, but that it is part of his duty to teach beginners (according to the words of the Apostle to the Corinthians, "even as unto babes in Christ, I have fed you with milk and

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<sup>1</sup> Littledale, "Plain Reasons," etc., p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclical Letter, p. 21.

not with strong meat), it is our purpose in this book to treat of those things which pertain to the Christian religion, in a manner adapted to the instruction of beginners. For we have considered that novices in this learning have been very much hindered in [the study of] works written by others; partly, indeed, on account of the multiplication of useless questions, articles and arguments, and partly [for other reasons]. To avoid these and other difficulties, we shall endeavour, relying on Divine assistance, to treat of those things which belong to sacred learning, so far as the subject will admit, with brevity and clearness."

All this is exceedingly good and promising, and the ingenuous student expects to find before him a task *brief, clear, and childish in its simplicity*. With this idea he takes a glance at the body of the treatise. His eyes open wide at the sight of this "brief" compendium of theology covering no fewer than 1,150 *folio pages*, each containing 2,000 words! He is amazed at the "milk" provided by this wise Catholic teacher for the special sustenance of theological "babes," when he is told that he must first digest *forty-three* propositions concerning the nature of God, each of which embraced several distinct articles separately discussed and concluded in the *eighty-three folios* devoted to this branch of the subject; then *fifteen* similar propositions regarding the nature of *angels*, embracing articles such as these:

Whether an angel can be in more than one place at one and the same time?

Whether more angels than one can be in one and the same place at the same time?

Whether angels have local motion?

And whether, if they have, they pass through intermediate space?

Then he is told to master ten propositions regarding *the Creation*, consisting of an elaborate attempt to bring into harmony the six days' work with mediæval notions of astronomy. These are to be followed by *forty-five* propositions respecting the nature of *man* before and after the Fall, the mode by which it was preserved immortal by eating of the tree of life, the place where man was created before he was placed in paradise, etc. Then, having digested all these subtle propositions, stated "briefly and clearly" in 216 of the aforesaid folio pages, he, poor novice! is informed for his consolation and encouragement that he had now mastered *not quite one-fifth part* of this "first book" for beginners in theological study, and that these propositions, and more than five times as many, were to be regarded by him as the settled

doctrine of the Catholic Church!<sup>1</sup> If such be the needful preparation for the study of the Bible, who can wonder if the Holy Scriptures remain for the future a sealed book to the majority of the Roman clergy, as it did in the days of the Schoolmen? Ample records exist to show how the system of St. Thomas Aquinas practically closed the sacred pages. The state of theological training and its results at Oxford University in the fifteenth century is described by one of its distinguished *alumni* at that time: "In the Universities they have ordained that no man shall look on the Scripture until he be noselled in heathen learning eight or nine years, and armed with false principles with which he is clean shut out of the understanding of the Scriptures. . . . And then when they be admitted to study divinity, because the Scripture is locked up with such false expositions and with false principles of natural philosophy that they cannot enter in, they go about the outside and dispute all their lives about words and vain opinions, pertaining as much unto the healing of a man's heel as health of his soul."<sup>2</sup> To the same effect speaks Folly in the satire of Erasmus: "These Schoolmen possess such learning and subtlety that I fancy that even the Apostles themselves would need another spirit if they had to engage with this new race of divines about questions. . . . With the greatest complacency divines go on spending night and day over their foolish studies, so that they never have any leisure left for the perusal of the Gospels, or the Epistles of St. Paul."<sup>3</sup> The same writer, in the preface to his *Novum Testamentum*, speaks of his work as opening again "the wells of Abraham, which the Scribes and Pharisees, those wicked and spiteful Philistines, had stopped and filled up with the earth of their false expositions."

To this deplorable condition of Biblical knowledge Pope Leo XIII. would lead his flock by placing them "under the guidance of St. Thomas of Aquin." An outsider of the Roman communion may be pardoned for thinking that the labour of writing the Encyclical Letter is not worth the candle, if its main scope and purpose be to make scholasticism the door of access to the sacred oracles. All the eloquent sentences in praise of the Inspired Volume, all the illustrations of its marvellous use, all the admonitions to its reverent study, can only be regarded as well-sounding phrases when contrasted with the manifest intention of fencing round the "inexhaustible treasury of heavenly doctrine" with an almost impassable

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<sup>1</sup> Seebohm's "Oxford Reformers," p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> Tindale's "Practice of Prelates," p. 291 (Parker Society).

<sup>3</sup> "Praise of Folly."

Thomist bog. The conclusion is inevitable that, in the Roman Church of to-day, Holy Scripture does not occupy the commanding position it once held for more than twelve hundred years. The teaching of the Fathers of the first six centuries, though referred to with high commendation in the Pope's Letter, is more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

An excuse is suggested for such a practice by the assertion of the Encyclical that "it must be recognised that the Sacred Writings are wrapt in a certain religious obscurity, and that no one can enter into their interior without a guide."<sup>1</sup> Patristic testimony, on the other hand, is flatly contradictory to this statement. The Fathers say most distinctly that in the things pertaining to salvation the Scriptures need no interpreter. The witness of St. Chrysostom is sufficient: "The Apostles and prophets have made all the things they published manifest and clear, and they have expressed them to us, just like ordinary secular teachers, so that each person by himself, from his own private reading, can learn the things which are said."<sup>2</sup>

The suggested difficulties of Holy Scripture, the expressed necessity of special guidance, the commendation of a difficult and obsolete system of preparatory studies practicable only for a select class, leave, after a careful perusal of the Papal Letter, the conviction that there is not, after all, any new departure to be found in the Vatican counsels on the subject matter of the Manifesto, and that the Holy Book will remain as jealously guarded and restricted from lay use as it has been for some centuries past.

D. MORRIS.



#### ART. IV.—WORTHY RECEIVERS.

THE beautiful city of Corinth lay smiling between its azure seas. It was a large and important commercial town, spread at the feet of a gigantic rock, like the Rock of Dumbar-ton, 2,000 feet high, which formed its citadel. The ancient city, which was one of great beauty and splendour, had been destroyed in a former generation by the Roman general Mummius. For nearly a century it lay desolate; but a new Corinth had risen from the ashes of the old. Julius Cæsar, recognising the importance of the isthmus as a military and mercantile position, sent to it a colony of Italians, who were

<sup>1</sup> P. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Hom. III. de Laz.