

# THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

---

VOL. XIX.

APRIL, 1915.

No. 2.

---

## SCRIPTURE PROOF IN THE VIEW OF MODERNISTS.

That the views which modern critical theologians hold of the origin of the Scriptures practically destroy both the causative and the normative authority of the Bible, and render it useless—except in a secondary manner—for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, has been pointed out long ago by the opponents of modernism. It was reasonably claimed that men could not consistently collect proof-texts for divine things from the only Book in which those things are propounded, if they do not believe that Book to be divinely originated and divinely effectual. With the passing of the old Bible, plenary inspired and inerrant, the old *Schriftbeweis* must go; the support is knocked from under systematic theology; the study of Bible-history becomes a study of Hebrew folklore, and preaching from Bible-texts an act of pious reverence for the past.

What Bible Christians have anticipated and feared is declared with appalling candor by a representative of the critical school of modern Protestant theology. At the "January Conference" at Dorpat Prof. Dr. Karl Girgensohn, of the local university, spoke to the pastors present on "Scripture Proof, Formerly and Now, in Evangelical Dogmatics."<sup>1</sup>) He beholds "a grave inner crisis" in Protestantism, "so powerful and thorough that disinterested bystanders—Catholic critics and

---

1) *Der Schriftbeweis in der evangelischen Dogmatik einst und jetzt.* Leipzig, 1914.

## THE FIRST ENCYCLICAL OF BENEDICT XV.

On All Saints' Day, November 1, 1914, the new Pope issued his first circular letter "to the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries in peace and communion with the Holy See." Following the established custom of naming official deliverances of the popes from their initial words, the document will be known and quoted under the title *Ad beatissimi Apostolorum*. Alluding to his recent elevation to "the chair of the Blessed Prince of the Apostles," which Benedict XV claims to have occurred "by the inscrutable design of divine Providence, without any merit on our part," the new Pope promulgates in this encyclical his administrative program. Having affirmed his belief in the primacy of Peter, he transfers to himself the commission given to Peter: "Feed My lambs, feed My sheep," and is overpowered "with the deepest feeling of charity" in view of the immensity of the flock entrusted to his care, "because under one aspect or another it embraces all men." On the basis of the universal redemption of Christ, he holds, the Church is instructed, not only to care for that part of the human race which is already in the

fold, but also to "lovingly compel the others to come in." Accordingly, he declares: "The first sentiment we experienced in our soul, and which was assuredly excited there by the divine goodness, was a certain incredible impulse of zeal and love for the salvation of all men." (p. 656; p. 669.)<sup>1)</sup>

On close inspection this papal program of universal salvation reduces itself to one point: the recognition by all men of the pope "as the common father of all men." (*ibid.*) He divides his encyclical into two parts: the first he addresses to "the civil society," the second, to the church. To the former he introduces himself as the peace-bringer. "May the merciful God grant that, as on the appearance of the divine Redeemer upon the earth, so at the beginning of our duty as His vicar the angels' voices may proclaim, 'Peace on earth to men of good will.'" He exhorts the nations not to permit his "paternal voice to be raised in vain." (p. 657; p. 670.) He reminds them that, "in face of their criminal mode of thinking and acting by which the constitution of human society is perverted," he has been "raised up by God to guard the truth." (p. 659; p. 672.) The separation of "the doctrine of the Gospel and of the Church from public instruction" he considers the source of all disturbances in modern society. (p. 660; p. 673.) Speaking to the Church, he takes "as addressed to himself what God said to the prophet: 'Lo, I have set thee this day over the nations and over kingdoms to root up and to pull down, . . . and to build and to plant.'" (*Nota bene:* This statement was wisely not embodied in the first part, because the Church is better prepared to receive it.) (p. 663; p. 676.) He warns every "private person" not to "assume the position of a master in the Church," but to "follow especially the guidance of him whom Christ has constituted the guardian and interpreter of the truth." (p. 664 f.; p. 677 f.) Catholic associations are expected to know that, in order to be

---

1) References in this article are to the *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, October, 1914; the first number refers to the Latin original, the second to the official English translation.

successful, they must "obey God by being obedient to the head of the Church," by "constantly and faithfully obeying the directions which have been, or will be, given to them by this Apostolic See." (p. 665; p. 679.)

It is an autocrat of the old school of papal absolutism that has been enthroned at the Vatican last September. Stubbornly as his predecessors he clamors for the restoration of his civil power. "For a long time now the Church has not enjoyed the complete liberty of which she has need; that is, since her head, the Sovereign Pontiff, has been deprived of the protection which by the will of divine Providence he obtained in the course of ages to safeguard that liberty. The result of depriving him of that protection was, as was inevitable, serious anxiety among Catholics, for all who profess to be sons of the Roman Pontiff—those who are at a distance, as well as those who are near—have a perfect and undeniable right to demand that their common father should be really and entirely free in the exercise of his apostolic ministry. Therefore, whilst most wishful that peace should be restored amongst the nations as soon as possible, we also desire that the abnormal condition in which the head of the Church finds himself, and which in many respects is highly injurious to the peace of peoples, should cease. We accordingly renew on the same grounds the protests on this subject which our predecessors made on several occasions, moved not by human considerations, but by the sacred sense of duty,—the duty, namely, of defending the rights and dignity of the Apostolic See." (p. 667; p. 680 f.) This appeal has been placed close to the end of the encyclical: it is the last serious matter which is on the Pope's mind, and he would have the report of this matter linger longest in the memory of men.

The old spirit of papal arrogance and ambition, then, pervades this first pronunciamento of the reigning Pope, but it has learned to speak in most endearing terms. Love is the keynote of the Pope's message; it breathes peace and good will toward all men. The pathos of the present world-tragedy

that is being enacted in the heart of Europe is eloquently expressed. There is apparently sincere grief over acts of injustice in the social body, and a proper plea for cooperation on the part of Catholics. Take, for instance, this fine word-picture of the horrors of the European war with its magnificent climax: "The fearful apparition of war is prominent everywhere, and nothing else engages men's attention. Great and flourishing nations are on the battlefields. Can we wonder that, as they are well supplied with those terrible means of destruction which the military art has invented, they fight against one another with awful butchery? There is no limit to the ruin and slaughter; every day the earth is drenched with fresh blood, and is covered with the wounded and the dead. And who would say that such men, armed one against the other, come from the same progenitor, that they are all possessed of the same nature, and that all belong to the same human society? Who would take them to be brothers, the sons of our Father who is in heaven? Whilst on every side furious battles are being fought with vast forces, nations, families, and individuals are oppressed by sorrow; day by day the number of widows and orphans increases immensely. Commerce languishes owing to the interruption of communications, the fields are empty, the arts are neglected, the rich are in poverty, the poor in squalor, and all are in grief." (p. 656 f.; p. 669 f.) Or this delineation of the haughty *Zeitgeist*: "The authority of those who are in power is no longer respected. From the time when all human power sought to emancipate itself from God, the Creator and Father of the universe, and to attribute its origin to man's free will, the bonds between superiors and inferiors have become so weak that they seem almost to have disappeared. An immoderate spirit of independence, combined with pride, has spread everywhere, invading even the family, whose authority so clearly arises from nature; and, what is more deplorable, it does not even stop at the steps of the sanctuary. Hence the contempt for laws, the insubordination of the masses, the saucy criticism of the commands of authority,

the numerous ways discovered for eluding discipline, and the frightful crimes of those who profess anarchy and do not hesitate to destroy the lives and property of others." (p. 659; p. 672.) Or this invective against Modernists: "Inflated and carried away by the great opinion they have formed of the human mind, which, thank God, has made astonishing progress in the study of nature, some, trusting in their own judgment, have spurned the authority of the Church, and in their temerity have gone so far as not to hesitate to measure with their intelligence and to adapt to the mode of thinking of these times the very mysteries of God and God's whole revelation to men. Therefore, there have arisen the monstrous errors of Modernism, which our predecessor rightly termed 'the synthesis of all heresies,' and solemnly condemned. This condemnation, venerable brethren, we here renew in its full extent, and since the contagion, which is so pestiferous, has not been entirely removed and yet creeps about here and there secretly, we exhort all to guard with great care against the danger of being infected by it. To it may fittingly be applied the words Job used of another matter: 'It is a fire that devoureth even to destruction, and rooteth up all things that spring.' (31, 12.) And we desire that Catholics should not only keep clear of the errors, but also of the tendency, and what is called the spirit, of the Modernists. Whoever is affected by this spirit rejects disdainfully whatever savors of antiquity, but eagerly searches for novelties everywhere—in the manner of speaking of divine things, in the celebration of divine worship, in the Catholic institutions, and in the private exercise of piety." (p. 665; p. 678 f.)

These are sentiments which, in a measure at least, could be expressed, in fact, are expressed, outside of the Roman Church, however from altogether different premises and for a different purpose. The hoary lie of papal supremacy in all things temporal and spiritual comes robed in the garments of heavenly truth, and steps demurely, and strikes affectingly reverent poses. There is here no trace of the old bluster and

holy bravado of the Bonifaces and Innocents and Urbans of yore. Though he would most certainly disavow it, Benedict XV, while denouncing Modernism, mutely defers to the spirit of the age, which dislikes and disavows even in Rome's own camp the fierce hierarchical tone of a former age. Rome never changes, — in essence, — but Rome ever varies the forms and methods of its activity, and is an adept in the art of adaptation and accommodation.

Particular interest attaches to the *ordo salutis* that this Pope proposes for the salvation of all men which he has made his program. For the temporal salvation of the civil society from all the ills which now prey upon it he proposes "a Christian philosophy," the foundation of which was laid in the Sermon on the Mount. (p. 662; p. 675.) The "beatitudes of man on earth" may not stop wars among nations, or correct the "disorders that have arisen in the human society, such as contempt for authority, want of mutual love amongst men, injustice in the relations between the different classes of society, and material welfare made the object of man's activity" (p. 658; p. 671), but they will reconcile men to the sorrows, cares, and miseries of this life, and teach them patience, whereby they will, in the end, "obtain access for themselves to those perfect and everlasting good things 'which God hath prepared for them that love Him.' (1 Cor. 2, 9.))" (p. 662; p. 675.) This Christian philosophy, together with the law of love which the Lord inculcated, will defeat the Socialists, "the perverse schools in which the heart of the young is fashioned like wax," *i. e.*, the non-religious state-schools, and the "writings which daily or at intervals mold the minds of the inexperienced masses, and other means by which public opinion is directed" (p. 661; p. 674), *i. e.*, the secular press, lyceum, chautauqua, etc., as far as it is not pro-Catholic.

To insure the continuous and efficient application of these means of papal salvation, "let princes and rulers of the people . . . reflect well whether it is a wise policy to separate the doctrine of the Gospel and of the Church from public instruction.

Sad experience shows that where religion has been banished, there human authority is despised. . . . When those who rule over the people despise divine authority, the people, in their turn, mock at human authority." (p. 660; p. 673.)

The world that is to be "saved" according to this plan has every Christian's sympathy. No doubt, this plan will be admired by many, because every man is by nature a Pelagian, and likes Pelagian teaching, and this Pope is, like his whole Church, a Pelagian. But it will lead nowhere but to conceit and blindness, especially if the organs of public education and information are to be papalized.

The Church is advised to shun innovations, and to aid the solidarity which has been the boast of the Roman Church. Every layman must implicitly obey his priest in all matters in which *Roma locuta est*; every priest must maintain the most filial relation to his bishop, and all must remember "to whom God has given the teaching office in the Church; let him have the unrestricted right to speak as he thinks fit, when he wishes; it is the duty of others to tender him devout homage when he speaks, and to obey his words." (p. 664; p. 677.) This effort to render the Catholic societies more cohesive and compact will be greatly aided by piety among the laymen and sanctity such as befits their office among the priests. An effect that has not been stated will be that the entire Church, from the cardinal down to the humblest laymen, will be more easily controlled by the Curia and become more readily responsive when summoned for any manifestation of papal power.

We pointed out before the shockingly improper parallel which the Pope desires to see realized between the *Gloria in excelsis*' sung at the birth of the Prince of Peace, and to be repeated when the present war in Europe shall have been concluded through the paternal offices of this Pope. We also noted the ominous conclusion of this encyclical, which links most emphatically the restoration of world-peace with the restoration of the civil power of the Pope in the old papal states. Political events in Europe and the trend of European diplo-

macy are Rome-ward, to judge from recent developments in London, Paris, and Berlin. The Roman hierarchy intends to use any political advantage which the present political situation in Europe may open up to it to the limit. The Pope's influence, we imagine, can be had for the price of the restoration of the "*patrimonium Petri.*"

D.

---