

employer and the employé, The right of property, the right of man to retain and enjoy that which he has earned by the sweat of his brow, or by genius and good fortune, has never been questioned by the Church and never will be."

**ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF OUR HOLY FATHER, LEO XIII., BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE POPE, ON THE STUDY OF SACRED SCRIPTURE.**

(Continued.)

The Holy Fathers, who had complete knowledge and experience of all this, never ceased from extolling the Sacred writings and their fruit. In numerous places they call them "that most wealthy treasury of heavenly doctrines" (Chrysos, in Gen. hom. 21, 2; hom. 60, 3; S. Aug. de Discipl. Chr. 2), or perennial fountains of salvation (St Athan. Ep. fest. 39), or they recommend them as fertile fields and most pleasant gardens in which the Lord's flock may be reinvigorated and delighted (S. Aug. Sermon. 26, 24; S. Ambr. in Ps., c. xviii., Sermon. 19, 2.) These words of St Jerome to the cleric Nepotianus may be aptly referred to; "Read the Holy Scriptures frequently; nay, let the Sacred writings never be out of your hands; learn that which you may teach. . . . Let the discourses of the priests be based upon the reading of the Scriptures" (St. Hieron de vit cler ad Nepot), and appropriate is the opinion of St Gregory the Great, than whom nobody has described more judiciously the duties of the priests of the Church. "It is necessary," he says "that those who attain to the office of preaching should never give up the study of the Sacred Scriptures" (St Greg. M. Regul. post. ii., al 22; Moral xviii., 26, al 14). Here, too, it is well to recall the admonition of St Augustine: "He is an empty preacher of the Word of God publicly who does not inwardly take it to heart" (St Aug. Sermon. 179, 1), and the instruction of the same Gregory to preachers "that they should examine themselves as to the words of Divine Scripture before setting them forth to others, lest in reproving other people's conduct they should neglect themselves" (S. Greg. M. Regul. post iii., 24, al 48). But from the example and pattern of Christ who "began to do and to teach" the voice of the Apostles had already insisted upon this, addressing not Timothy alone but the clergy of all ranks in this command, "take heed to thyself and to doctrine; be earnest in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. iv., 16). Assuredly exceptional aids to salvation and perfection both for one's self and others are ready to hand in the sacred writings, a fact which is the subject of eloquent praise in the Psalms; but these aids are for those who bring to the consideration of the Divine writings not merely a docile and attentive mind but a just and pious disposition of soul. For these books are not to be regarded as of the ordinary kind, but because they were dictated by the Holy Spirit Himself, and contain matters which are of the highest moment, and in many points reconcile and exceedingly difficult to understand and interpret, they always need the coming of the same Spirit—that is, His light and grace; and these, as we are frequently reminded by the authority of the Divine Psalmist, are to be asked for with humble prayer, and to be preserved by holiness of life.

Clearly, therefore, from this arose the precautions taken by the Church, which by means of the most admirable institutions and laws has taken care "that this heavenly treasury of the Sacred Books which the Holy Spirit bountifully gives to men should not lie neglected" (Conc. Trid., sess. v, decret. de refor. 1), for she has arranged not only that a large portion of them should be read and piously pondered by all her ministers in the daily office of sacred psalmody, but also that the explanation and interpretation of them should be dealt with by men of suitable ability in cathedral churches, in monasteries, and in convents of other regulars in which studies may conveniently flourish. And she has strictly ordered that at least on Sundays and solemn festivals the faithful should be nourished with the salutary words of the Gospel (*ibidem* 1-2). To the wisdom and care of the Church, also, has been due in every age a lively devotion to the Scriptures, which has been productive of preeminent advantages. In this connection, to strengthen our previous exhortations, it gives us pleasure to note how from the beginning of the Christian religion those who were distinguished by sanctity of life and the knowledge of divine things always paid frequent and assiduous attention to the Sacred Writings. We see the immediate disciples of the Apostles, amongst them Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, likewise the apologists, especially Justin and Irenæus in their letters and books, whether concerned with the protection or recommendation of Catholic dogmas, deriving from the Sacred writings in particular confidence, vigour and every grace of piety. Catechetical and theological schools having sprung up in connection with various episcopal sees—those at Alexandria and Antioch were most celebrated—the teaching imparted in these consisted scarcely of anything else but the reading, explanation, and defence of the Divine Scriptures. From them came forth many Fathers and writers whose labours, studies, and excellent works formed such a rich store during the three following centuries or so that the period was called the

"golden age of Biblical exegesis." Amongst the Easterns the principal place is held by Origen, wonderful for the quickness of his intellect and persevering labours, whose numerous writings and immense work, the Hexapla, nearly all others have drawn upon in turn. Mention should be made of a number who have extended the limits of this study. For instance, among the most distinguished Alexandria produced Clement and Cyril; Palestine, Eusebius and another Cyril; Cappadocia, Basil the Great and the two Gregories, Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa; Antioch, the renowned John Chrysostom, whose skill as a Biblical scholar rivalled his lofty eloquence. Nor were others less noteworthy in the West. Eminent amongst those deserving of a singular commendation are the names of Tertullian, Cyprian, Hilary, and Ambrose, Leo the Great and Gregory the Great; most illustrious of all are those of Augustine and Jerome, one of whom was remarkably acute in discerning the meaning of Scripture and most successful in applying it to the support of Catholic truth, while the other from his extraordinary knowledge of the Bible and his great labours upon its application has been honoured by the voice of the Church with the title of *Doctor Maximus*. Although this study was not pursued with the same ardour and fruit from that time up to the eleventh century, still it flourished, mainly through the exertions of the clergy, for they took care to consult the best works that the ancients had left on this subject, and publish them suitably edited with editions of their own, as was done especially by Isidore of Seville, Bede, and Alcuin; or to elucidate the Sacred manuscripts with glosses, as did Valafrius, Strabo, and Anselm Laudouensis, or, like Peter Damian and Lanfranc, to take fresh measures for preserving them in their entirety. But in the twelfth century a great many treated, in a praiseworthy way, of the allegorical meaning of the Scriptures; in this expository method St Bernard, whose writings scarcely savour of anything else than the Divine Scriptures, easily excelled all others. A fresh and agreeable development was given to this study by the system of the scholastics. Although they sought to investigate the genuine reading of the Latin version, as is plainly shown by the *Correctoria Biblica* which they drew up, yet they devoted greater zeal and industry to explanation and interpretation; for in a regular and clear manner, than which there had been nothing better previously, the various senses of the sacred language were distinguished; the weight of each was considered theologically; the parts of the books and the subjects of the parts were defined; the designs of the writers were sought out; the relationship and interconnection of the sentences explained. Everyone must see how much light was by this means brought to bear on obscure passages. Moreover, a choice abundance of Spiritual learning is fully displayed both in their works on theology and their commentaries on the Scriptures; in which respect Thomas Aquinas held the palm amongst them. Then when Our predecessor Clement V. added to the Athenæum in this city and some celebrated universities courses of Oriental literature Our people began to labour with greater accuracy on the primitive codex of the Bible and on the Latin copy. The erudition of the Greeks being then brought back to us, and all the more effectually because of the new method of book printing, happily discovered, the cultivation of the Sacred Scripture extensively increased. It is marvellous in what a short space of time copies chiefly of the *Vulgate* multiplied by the Press filled, so to speak, the Catholic world, in such honour and regard were the sacred volumes held during this very period which is unfairly assailed by the enemies of the Church. Nor should we omit to notice what a number of learned men, mainly from amongst the religious congregations come forward to promote Biblical knowledge from the Council of Vienna to that of Trent; and these employing new aids and bringing into requisition their varied stock of erudition and ability not only increased the accumulated resources left by those who had gone before, but it may be said opened the way for the pre-eminence of the age which followed the same Council of Trent, and during which the glorious age of the Fathers almost appeared to have returned. Nobody is unaware and it is pleasant to recall the fact that our predecessors from Pius IV to Clement VIII caused the preparations of those celebrated editions of ancient versions the *Vulgate* and the *Alexandrine* which were afterwards brought out by the command and authority of Sixtus V and the same Clement and are in common use. It is known that in those times other ancient versions of the Bible as well as the Polyglots of Antwerp and Paris, thoroughly suitable for the purpose of sincere investigation, were most carefully brought out, that there was no book of either Testament which had not more than one capable expositor; and no serious question connected with the subject that did not in an elaborate way exercise the abilities of many; amongst whom not a few of the more studious Holy Fathers won for themselves a distinguished reputation. Nor in truth has energetic ability been wanting amongst our people since that age, for men of distinction have continued to do good work in the same sphere, and against the figments of Rationalism wrested from philology and kindred studies have vindicated the Sacred writings by arguments drawn from the same sources. They who consider all these things fittingly as they should will certainly allow that the Church has never in any way failed to provide for the diffusion amongst her children of the waters from the fountains of Divine Scripture, and that she has always maintained and equipped with every resource of learning the watchful attitude in which she has been divinely placed for the protection and safeguarding of the dignity of these writings, so that she has not needed and does not need any *stimuli* from outsiders.

(To be continued)

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