To Rome and Back.

By the Rev. A. W. HUTTON, M.A.

II. Reaction from Rome.

IN the controversy with Rome the Bible has sometimes played a part that might occasion surprise, so much depending, not merely on the study of the Bible, but on the spirit in which it is studied. There is no apter illustration, perhaps, of what the Bible itself says about itself, "The letter killeth; but the spirit giveth life." Even words spoken by our Lord Himself, if taken with little or no reference to the context, to the occasion, or to the interpretation placed on those words at the time and for long afterwards—such words, when interpreted in accordance with a later ecclesiastical tradition, may obtain an almost irresistible Romeward force, and irrevocably affect the career of men who are only anxious to obey their Lord's commands. These are illustrations of what may happen, and of what does happen, if we bind ourselves by the letter and neglect the spirit. And it is the spirit of the Bible that constantly underlies what I now have to say. And the spirit of the Bible may work negatively in convincing a man that Roman Catholicism, as a practical system, is not in accordance with that spirit; or it may work positively, pointing out to men the "more excellent way," in which the Father may be worshipped "in spirit and in truth," for He seeketh such to worship Him, and to this His invitation we must not remain unresponsive.

And when I speak of "Reaction from Rome," some of my readers may think it strange that anyone should have needed more than seven years (viz., from January, 1876, until November, 1883) to perceive that the acceptance of Roman Catholicism by anyone who has previously had experience of a broader system of Christian Churchmanship is a mistake, which has to be made good by secession from the newly adopted Communion. Surely, they would say, the case is so clear as to render inexcusable any such delay. Well, for one thing it may be said that the criterion,

"By their fruits ye shall know them," is largely in favour of Rome. Of course it may be urged that a low standard of morality is prevalent among the poorer classes—Irish or Italian, or whatever they may be—who are herded together in miserable tenements in such great cities as Liverpool or Manchester, or in certain parts of the East End of London. And it is true that the criminal statistics in these cases show a much higher percentage than that of the proportion of Roman Catholics in this country to the population generally. It is a difference, I believe, between about 5 per cent. for the population generally, and from 15 to 20 per cent. for criminals. But the conditions, just referred to, under which these poor people live, must be taken into the reckoning; and, though much more might be said adversely on that side, there is a side of Roman Catholicism very little known to the general public, which certainly must be counted unto them for righteousness, and righteousness indeed it is, of a very impressive, though not of a very showy, kind. So far as my experience goes, I should say that the standard of purity in private life is distinctly higher among Roman Catholics than it is among Protestants; and further, that there is ordinarily a higher standard observed of charity in conversation. No doubt sharp and harsh things are occasionally said about others, and especially about persons who have left the Roman Catholic Church—though of this I have little or no direct knowledge—but generally speaking, those elements of disparagement, of detraction, and of rash judgment, so common in the talk of ordinarily religious people among ourselves, are markedly absent from the conversation of the mass of Roman Catholics. The charity that "hopeth all things," constantly bears fruit in a kindly silence, if not always in active defence of persons whose conduct is under discussion. And this surely counts, and rightly counts, for a great deal. But I must pass on rapidly, if I am to refer, even briefly, to things which tend to reaction, such as inevitably follows, where any cause has been embraced with more enthusiasm than knowledge. "Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." "Ye make the Word of God of none

effect through your traditions." "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do." These are three texts, or, more exactly, three sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ, which reveal the whole spirit of His teaching, and the spirit also of the Bible—texts which of necessity are called to remembrance by those who have been brought up in a Bible atmosphere, but have afterwards fallen under the spell of Rome. It is possible, indeed, to fight against their first and obvious significance. Thus, while our Lord, in the words which I first quoted, disparages the "commandments of men" as injurious to the spirit of true religion, He is also related to have given to His Apostles the power to legislate for the Church, and to their legislation He gives the highest possible sanction: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." He also declared that He had not come to destroy the old Law, but to fulfil it; and He is recorded on various occasions to have instructed people to keep to the traditional observances: "Go, show thyself to the priest," and so forth; and He and His disciples attended the temple services, apparently without any protest against the ceremonial therein used, but denouncing only the avarice of those who made money in the courts of the temple, by selling to the worshippers—it would seem at exorbitant prices—the things that they needed for the sacrifices, or for other duties. This may be urged, no doubt, on the other side, and it cannot be denied that the Gospels do, here and there, place in our Lord's mouth sayings which seem inconsistent with his lofty spiritual teaching, which we have in those words about "worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth," and elsewhere. My point is that the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, as taught by Himself, and taught by His most notable convert and worshipper, St. Paul, is essentially a religion of the spirit. It is not a religion of observances, but of spiritual union of the soul with God. And observances are certainly disparaged, if not denounced, by St. Paul, although on certain occasions he accommodated himself to them. Now, anyone who has had an

opportunity to survey Roman Catholicism from within must know that it is mainly and (for the mass of the people) almost exclusively a religion of observances. No doubt saints arise from time to time within the Roman Church, on whom the burden of observances presses very lightly, because they live habitually in a higher atmosphere, and, while conforming to the rules, make little account of them. But, for the average Roman Catholic, the routine of his religious life is a routine of observances; and their indispensable necessity is to him far more certain than the indispensable necessity of the moral law. To hear Mass on Sundays, not coming in later than the Gospel or leaving before the blessing; to abstain from flesh-meat on Fridays, and, until the age of sixty, to observe the prescribed days of fasting; to go to Confession with due submission to the directions of the priests, and to receive the Communion at least every year at Easter (or within a few weeks of Easter, whether before or after); to receive the Communion fasting; and to contribute towards the maintenance of the clergy and of Divine service—these things are indispensable, and in most cases it would be regarded as a mortal sin—*i.e.*, a sin punishable for ever in hell (unless repented of before death), to fail in the performance of these duties, while, on the other hand, the regular performance of these duties means assured salvation.

And then, as to the prohibition of vain repetitions in prayer. Well, let us admit that in all worship, whether public or private, some repetition is almost inevitable. We of the Church of England know how in the old "full Morning Service" the Lord's Prayer used in some churches to be said as often as six times. We have the frequent repetition of the *Gloria Patri*, and of the responses in the Litany. I do not mention these things either to defend or to condemn them. I only say that if we condemn repetitions in the Roman Catholic services, we must not forget that we may ourselves be blamed for the same thing by severe critics. But our repetitions are as nothing compared with those of Roman Catholic worship, the number and extent of which render necessary an utterance so rapid as to be hardly articulate,

while the meaning of the words really counts for nothing. Thus, the saying of the Rosary is, for pious Roman Catholics, a daily practice, by way of private prayer, and it is also very popular as a part of the public Sunday Evening Service. Well, the Rosary, with its fifteen "mysteries," is seldom said as a whole; a third part of it more commonly suffices. But what does this mean? It means, in addition to five repetitions of the Lord's Prayer and five of the *Gloria Patri*, no fewer than fifty repetitions of the *Hail Mary*, which itself consists of over forty words, so that the Rosary, even in the abridged form of one-third, and including the two other formularies I have mentioned, runs to over 800 words; and its recitation irresistibly recalls our Lord's condemnation of the prayers of the heathen, "who think they shall be heard through their much speaking." The same criticism is applicable to the special devotions of the clergy, the saying of Mass, and the recitation of the Breviary. Both the Missal and the Breviary contain much that is very beautiful and Scriptural; our own Prayer-Book has drawn largely on both books. But the amount that has (in each case) to be said, coupled with the indifference universally displayed towards the sense of the words, or to their being intelligible to the hearers, has resulted in a rush, which has become the established custom, so far that any departure from it would be regarded as tedious and intolerable. If the Mass were said throughout with that reverent deliberation which is ordinarily characteristic of our Prayer-Book services, it would, as a rule, last not much less than an hour, whereas half an hour is seldom exceeded for the saying of it, and some priests boast that they can say it in twenty or even in fifteen minutes. And the private recitation of the Breviary is, as a rule, even more rapid and unintelligent. Now, what is the explanation of all this? In the last resort it can be traced back to the principle of obedience to ecclesiastical authority. If the practical system of the Roman Church may be summed up as observances, observances, observances, the principle that underlies it all may with equal brevity be summed up as obedience, obedience, obedience. These long services (as

they are in form, implying the presence of a congregation as well as of the officiant) have somehow to be gone through daily in obedience to authority—an authority which declares that failure to discharge these obligations means mortal sin. And so the hurry (the irreverent hurry) comes from the determination of men (who after all are human) to spend as little time as possible over a duty which is hardly regarded as religious, though it is admitted to be binding. Of course, on the other side, we must set the practice of meditation—formal meditation —chiefly taught by Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, in the sixteenth century; and it is doubtless this practice that produces still at this day saints among the Roman clergy. But even this tends to become mechanical, when used by men to whom the things of the Spirit are practically unknown. Obedience no doubt secures unity; but it is a deadly kind of unity, very different from that unity of spirit which was the object of our Lord's Prayer. But this unity certainly means power; and the possession of it, in some sense, justifies that domineering spirit which is characteristic of the Roman Church. Only within that Church can it be realized how all other forms of Churchmanship, or even of Christianity, are accounted as nothing worth or even rather as baneful. And, when you find this arrogance, coupled with a general absence of culture and of all that constitutes a liberal education, with ignorance of the Bible and of Church history, and with an intolerant spirit that is either unable or unwilling to understand any other point of view, this question must arise in your mind, To what does all this serve? Does this great world-wide Church, with all its elaborate organization, its picturesque ceremonial, and its control, through the confessional, over the souls of men, does it tend to elevate? does it provide spiritual force? does it preach a Gospel that can endure, alongside of, and in support of, the moral and intellectual growth of mankind? And when I seriously asked myself these questions, I found that I had reached the point at which it was necessary for me, if I was to remain true to myself, to sever my connection with this ancient

Church, which, seven years earlier, I had sacrificed a good deal to enter. The words "Modernist" and "Modernism" had not come into use at the date (1883) to which I refer; but I may fairly describe myself as having been, in that year, a Modernist "born out of due time." Not much of what is now well-known as the Higher Biblical Criticism was then printed, or even written; but still, some such ideas were in the air, and it was my desire to keep abreast of the learning of the day, and to interpret the doctrines of the Church in accordance with that learning. There was, moreover, some justification for this desire; for, while I was at the Birmingham Oratory, and was daily giving religious instruction in the elementary schools, the Catechism was so far altered as to admit that the "days" of Creation were more likely "periods" of indefinite length; and I had among my books an essay of Cardinal Wiseman's, in which he admitted that a free or poetical interpretation might be given to some passages in the Liturgy, especially mentioning a sentence used in the Mass for the Dead. This principle of poetical interpretation seemed to me a very valuable one, capable of wide extension; for example, on this principle, it might be held, if not taught publicly, that the "Host" was not really, by an invisible miracle, transubstantiated into the Body of Christ, but that it remained as it was, and should be regarded as a symbol of Christ as the Bread of Life, the external acts of worship with which Catholic ritual surrounds it being directed, not to the actual visible Host, but to Christ Himself, spiritually present with His faithful people. I believe that a good many priests do really take this symbolic view, as a relief to their intelligence; but of course it must not be publicly avowed. My dream, however, of a Catholicism thus spiritually interpreted came to nothing when I found that it had been condemned thirteen years earlier by the Vatican Council: "If anyone should say that it is possible that at some future time, in accordance with the progress of knowledge, a meaning may be given to dogmas taught by the Church other than that which the Church understood and understands, let him be anathema." Another decree of the same

Council, insisting on the integrity and inspiration of Holy Scripture, expressly includes all those portions which scholarship, whether in the sixteenth or in the nineteenth century, has shown not to have formed part of the original text. I thus found myself in a clearly false position, apparently assenting to propositions which in my heart and mind I rejected as untenable. And from the Roman Church a man must depart promptly, if he has doubts about its teaching. There is no recognized harbour of refuge for Liberalism there. And so I announced my intention to Cardinal Newman; who, while he was as courteous and as affectionate as ever, and showed anxiety as to what my future might be, none the less agreed that there was no other course open to me. In a sense I may say that, by God's grace, I saved my soul when, in 1876, I abandoned what was becoming a dishonest position in the Church of England by submission to Rome; and that I saved it a second time in 1883, when I exchanged a similarly dishonest position in the Church of Rome for spiritual freedom outside all Churches. But there was still another conversion, another saving of the soul, to be accomplished, and for this I had to wait some years.

(*To be continued.*)

Zeno the Stoic and St. Paul at Athens.

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THE teaching of Zeno the Stoic, and the preaching of St. Paul the Apostle, at Athens—the Christian coming three hundred years later—constitute an interesting historical contrast. The one proclaimed a new philosophy, and the other a new religion. Each was more or less original, and each the founder of a faith destined to grip the world, if the former appealed more to the head and the latter to the heart. But we need not suppose for a moment that the great Apostle to the