

cially those who conduct the higher educational establishments, the necessity of taking every care that those whom they prepare to be leaders in our social life shall not be compelled by their ignorance of the Church's glorious history to so demean themselves as if the popular errors regarding the Church were true, or as if it were no business of theirs to vindicate before the world her rights and her honor. We likewise commend to the parochial clergy the establishment and encouragement of literary societies, especially in populous centres; and we request the clergy to make it a point of duty to assist in making these societies the means of propagating among our young men a sound historical knowledge of our holy religion.

### The Catholic Church and the Bible

In the domain of thought also, the Church has had to sustain a fierce conflict, and she has been enabled to come forth unscathed. From the days of Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists, at the end of the eighteenth century, the opposition of what is known as 'modern thought' and of popular literature to Christianity and to God has been very acute. And, owing to the great spread among the multitudes of the ability to read and the ready zeal of the Church's enemies to supply cheap reading matter, great havoc has been wrought with the faith of Christians, especially outside the Catholic Church. Then the triumphs of scientific discoveries in the domain of physics and chemistry, and their application to the daily needs of life, have given to physical science an undue influence with the multitude, an influence which some of the leading teachers of that science have not hesitated to use to the destruction of the Christian Faith. But in this conflict also we have already entered on a period of comparative triumph for the Church; and earnest men of every class are coming to realise that in philosophy, science, and other departments of human knowledge

'Our little systems have their day,  
They have their day, and cease to be.'

But when the deluge of opinions subsides there is always found one institution which, instead of being engulfed by the waves, is carried on their surface, and borne to a higher plane than it has previously occupied. That institution is the Catholic Church, fitly typified by the Ark of Noe, in which the only survivors of humankind were saved from the deluge of waters.

### In the Revolt of Modern Rationalism

against dogmatic revealed religion, the fiercest attack of the enemies has been against the Bible, which they would fain deprive of its sacred character and traditional honor among Christians by contending that it bears in itself the proofs of human fallibility, and cannot, therefore, be accepted as the Word of God.

It is well known that the section of Christianity called Protestants has made the Bible the full and sole rule of its belief, and thus, if the contention of rationalism were well founded, Christianity, as represented by Protestantism, would be doomed to pass into the region of false and abandoned systems. And, indeed, every serious student must be filled with grave misgiving for the future of Protestantism as a religious system when he finds the authorised ministers in no small number adopting the views of Rationalists on the Bible.

For the Catholic, on the other hand, there is no such fear. The depository of his dogmas and the rule of his belief is not the sacred text of Scripture, but a living society—a society constituted before one page of the New Testament was written, and guided in every moment of its existence by the same Holy Spirit who inspired both prophets and evangelists. The Catholic is equally certain that the Church which teaches him, and the Bible which that Church interprets for him, are both infallible, because both proceed from

### The Same Spirit of Truth.

But, as a written code of laws would be insufficient to direct human conduct without living judges to interpret it, so can the Bible be regarded as an infallible guide only so far as it is presented and interpreted by living men, who have been commissioned by its Author to teach its lessons to mankind. The Catholic, therefore, believes the infallibility of the Bible, because he believes the infallibility of the Church; and he is not disturbed by the opposition of Rationalism, because he knows that reason, man's most God-like natural endowment, when rightly used, cannot contradict Revelation, which is the supernatural light of God's spirit showing man his high origin and his exalted destiny. The Catholic of the present day has, moreover, the confidence inspired by the success with which the Church has defended the teachings of the Bible

through nineteen centuries against every form of attack that human reason, often impelled by depraved human passions, could devise. And so, even by the test of success, he judges the Bible still worthy of his trust and reverence as the written code of God's revelation. Nor has he the least doubt that the ever-living tribunal which can adapt itself to the fresh circumstances that may arise, will be as successful in the future as it has been in the past in protecting and interpreting

### God's Written Word

for the instruction and edification of man unto life eternal. While the Catholic, with a firm faith, accepts from the Church the Bible, and the interpretation of it, he does not ignore or belittle the value of learned research into the records of the past, by which the origin of the Sacred Writings, the immediate purpose of their composition, and other similar matters, may be inquired into. On the contrary, in such studies the Church's scholars have always been in the front ranks of the learned; and the Church authorities have fostered and promoted such research, and have never hesitated to acknowledge any corrections of traditional views, when the sound and mature results of study have shown these corrections to be reasonable.

And so it is to-day. One of the last and most important of the many golden Encyclicals of the late glorious Pontiff, Leo XIII., was that entitled, 'Providentissimus Deus,' in which that eminent patron of learning and wisdom reviewed the question of Biblical study, and taught as a master the principles that should regulate it. In this letter the Pontiff, in his 'long-cherished desire to give an impulse to the noble science of Holy Scripture, and to impart to Scripture study a direction suitable to the needs of the present day,' exalts the importance of these studies, and vindicates to the Church what is often denied to her, the claim, 'that she has never failed in taking due measures to bring the Scriptures within reach of her children, and that she has ever held fast and exercised profitably that guardianship conferred on her by Almighty God for the protection and glory of His Holy Word.' He directs students on various points as to the proper manner of treating the study of the Bible, and of defending it against the attacks of modern criticism and the supposed opposition of physical science. A few months before his death the indefatigable Pontiff constituted a commission of Cardinals and learned consultants, called the Commission of Biblical Studies. These he charged, not only to defend the Catholic faith regarding Holy Scripture, but also to keep themselves informed of all that is written on the Bible, and not to neglect any of the special sources, such as philology, the Oriental languages, and the study of early manuscripts, from which light may be gained in this difficult matter. His present Holiness, Pope Pius X., has enlarged the scope of this Commission, and empowered it to grant degrees in Biblical theology.

### The Study of the Bible

by non-Catholic Christians has not been conducted on these lines. The non-Catholic Christian, having cast aside the authority of a living Church, must needs go forth on the ocean of enquiry without the staying power which fallible human reason needs in a voyage so full of difficulty and danger. Instead of looking to the Church which Jesus Christ established, as the depository and guardian of religious truth for all ages, he must regard his own Church as a society of men seeking after the truth, which they have no guarantee of ever finding, no test of recognising. If perchance they should come across it in their searching. Then again, with many of them, though professing to be believers and to have divine faith, their assent to the truths of faith is such as to produce rather opinion than certitude. Having no divinely-appointed teacher 'to look to, they take human reason as their supreme guide, and, studying the supernatural truths of God by the light of mere nature, setting reason above faith, their conclusions must needs be defective and uncertain. Every day is bringing about more fully the undoing of the Christianity of such as these; and their right to the name of Christian is daily growing less. To-day they shock the pious ears of Christians by calling in question the virginity of the Most Holy Mother of God—denying to this most exalted of God's creatures that privilege which she herself hesitated to forego even for the dignity of the Divine Maternity, and which the universal voice of mankind has recognised by calling her The Virgin. If they still regard Jesus Christ as something more than a mere man, it does not require a prophet's powers to foretell that before long they will also despoil Him of His claim on the reverence of men by denying His Divinity.