

A LIVELY CONTROVERSY IN PALMERSTON

The following additional letter from the Rev. Father J. Lynch appeared in the *Palmerston and Waikouaiti Times* of May 9:—

'Sir,—“In scarcely a single instance has a case concerning the Catholics been fairly stated, or the channels of history not been grossly, not to say wickedly, corrupted.” So wrote a Methodist minister, the Rev. Dr. Nightingale, in his book, *Religion of All Nations*, page 66. It must be fairly evident to the people of Palmerston that this severe censure falls upon Rev. Mr. Clarke. For the fourth time I call Rev. Mr. Clarke's attention to the point at issue between us. The point is this: that the Catholic Church officially teaches the wholesale damnation of heretics and non-Catholics—i.e., of all Protestants, Pagans, Jews, Mahommedans—in short, all of those not *external* members of her fold. This is the gross accusation Rev. Mr. Clarke has made against the Catholic Church. This is what I invited, and still invite, him to prove with authentic evidence. I denied that the Catholic Church so teaches. I adduced, and will adduce, further evidence to show that she repudiates such teaching as cruel, merciless, and Calvinistic. Rev. Mr. Clarke, either through fatuity or wilfulness, has failed, or pretended to fail, to see that this was, and is, the point which I invited him to prove with authentic evidence. I did nothing so foolish as to declare that the Catholic Church repudiates the axiom, “Outside of the Church there is no salvation,” as “un-Christian, merciless, and Calvinistic.” I wrote in my second letter: “This highly technical axiom is found in thousands of places in the writings of the ancient Fathers, the Creeds, the theological text-books, the Canon law books—in fact, in every source (locus) of Catholic theology from Origen (born about 185 A.D.), St. Cyprian (who died a martyr in 258 A.D.), the Athanasian Creed, St. Augustine, etc., down to the present day.” What the Catholic Church, therefore, repudiates “as unchristian, merciless, and Calvinistic,” is the false interpretation Rev. Mr. Clarke has put on the axiom, not the axiom itself, or the kindly interpretation which “her sober but boundless charity” (Mallock) has ever given it.

'Rev. Mr. Clarke writes in his reply to my third letter that I admit that this axiom has been part “of his (my) Church's teaching from the ninth century to the present day.” This is a fine specimen of Rev. Mr. Clarke's accuracy. Why, I declared that the equivalent of this axiom was found in the Old and New Testament, and that Origen wrote its exact words towards the close of the second or the beginning of the third century.

'In my second letter I accused Rev. Mr. Clarke of having perverted the plain truth by wilfully suppressing the explanatory note appended by Father Di Bruno to the words of the Creed of Pope Pius IV. In my third letter I quoted this explanatory note, together with a portion of Chapter 45, No. 7, page 219, “Things that Catholics do not believe.” There it is *clearly* taught that “Catholics do not believe that Protestants who are baptised, who lead a good life, love God and their neighbor, and are *blamelessly* ignorant of the just claims of the Catholic religion to be the true religion, are excluded from Heaven.” This explanation Rev. Mr. Clarke rejects as worthless because “it is a purely personal remark” made by the author. Might I not retort: What are your “notes and comments” but purely personal remarks? Surely a Catholic theologian has more right than a Presbyterian minister to say what the Catholic Church teaches or does not teach. I call the attention of the public to the fact that Rev. Mr. Clarke, with a great flourish of trumpets, introduced this self-same Father Di Bruno as a highly approved and authoritative Catholic theologian. But now, when this authority, which he so triumphantly cited against me, has given him the “lie direct,” what does Rev. Mr. Clarke do? He rejects him as worthless, because, forsooth, he (Father Di Bruno) is giving his personal explanation of the words of the Creed. Strange that a Presbyterian minister,

who believes in the right of private interpretation, should so ruthlessly deny it to others! I ask you, Rev. Mr. Clarke, does this mode of controversy “make for truth and self-respect”?

'Rev. Mr. Clarke in his first letter wrote thus: “There is also lying before me a ‘Simple Exposition of Catholic Doctrine,’ by the Very Rev. Faà Di Bruno, D.D., whose book is highly commended by the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.” Note well that the Rev. Mr. Clarke declares that *this book* “is highly commended” by no less an authority than the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, a convert to the Catholic Church. If, then, Rev. Mr. Clarke, *the book itself* is “highly commended,” it follows that everything taught in the book is also “highly commended.” Now the explanatory note and the chapter on “things that Catholics do not believe” are things taught in the book, therefore they are also “highly commended.” If this explanation (the note, p. 244, and No. 7, chapter 45) of the Catholic Church's attitude towards the salvation of those outside her fold was not the *correct teaching* of the Catholic Church—was directly contrary to what Pope Pius IV. “wanted all Catholics to believe,” was in flat contradiction to what “the Roman Catholic Plenary Council of Australasia wanted instilled into the minds of the Roman Catholic children”—how is it that the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster could do anything so rash as “highly commend” it? This is all the more wonderful since Rev. Mr. Clarke declares that “the definitions of the Pontiffs and General Councils admit of no private, personal explanations.” Yet the ugly fact remains that the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster “highly commended” this book. Evidently Rev. Mr. Clarke thinks that the Cardinal Archbishop was a very foolish and irresponsible person! It is strange, too, that the Cardinal Archbishop was not severely censured by the Pope and the Hierarchy for “toning down” and misrepresenting “the official teaching of the Catholic Church”! Rev. Mr. Clarke dogmatically declares that the Catholic Church officially teaches the wholesale damnation of Protestants “because they are outside the Church.” The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster “highly commends” a book by a Catholic theologian wherein the very opposite is taught. Whom shall we believe? Who is in the best position to know what the Catholic Church officially teaches—the Cardinal Archbishop, who was a good Catholic, or the Rev. Mr. Clarke, who is only a Presbyterian?

'Rev. Mr. Clarke takes exception to what he calls the “provided” laid down by Father Di Bruno's (Simple Exposition, etc., Ch. 45, No. 7, p. 219) as necessary conditions for the salvation of those outside the Catholic Church. I ask you candidly whether you and your Presbyterian Catechism do not require as conditions for salvation that men (1) believe in one God and three Divine Persons; (2) that God will reward the good and punish the wicked; (3) that Jesus Christ is the Son of God-made man, Who redeemed us, and in Whom we must trust for our salvation; (4) that men thoroughly repent of having ever, by their sins, offended God? These are the “provided,” together with a good life and blameless ignorance of the claims of the Catholic Church, which Father Di Bruno lays down for the salvation of baptised Protestants. (See note p. 219 for even further limitations regarding belief in three Divine Persons.) Yet Rev. Mr. Clarke sneers at these conditions. Thereby he shows that he is trying to “tone down” not merely a few words of a Creed, but *Christianity itself*. Oh, horror! horror! Yes, indeed, but what other construction can be put upon his sneering at a Catholic writer for making these four items necessary for the salvation of baptised Protestants? I am afraid, Rev. Mr. Clarke, that if you are not careful, we shall have a Presbyterian “heresy hunt” in Palmerston.

'Father Di Bruno, writing as a “highly approved” Catholic theologian, *flatly denies* that the Catholic Church teaches the wholesale damnation of Protestants and all non-Catholics. Rev. Mr. Clarke as a *highly discredited* “Presbytero-Catholic” theologian *vehemently affirms* that the Catholic Church “denounces all heretics and non-Catholics” as altogether without

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