

Triumph of the Church
(History of Heresies and its Refutation)

St. Alphonsus Marie de Liguori

Dublin: Published by James Duffy, 10, Wellington-Quay. 1847.
Printed by William Holdin, 10, Abbey-street.

Translator's Preface

THE ardent wish manifested by "the Faithful for an acquaintance with the valuable writings of ST. LIGUORI, induced me to undertake the Translation of his History of Heresies, one of his greatest works. The Holy Author was induced to write this Work, to meet the numbers of infidel publications, with which Europe was deluged in the latter half of the last century. Mens minds were then totally unsettled; dazzled by the glare of a false philosophy, they turned away from the light of the Gospel. The heart of the Saint was filled with sorrow, and he laboured to avert the scourge he saw impending over the unfaithful people. He implored the Ministers of his Sovereign to put the laws in force, preventing the introduction of irreligious publications into the Kingdom of Naples, and he published this Work, among* others, to prove, as he says, that the Holy Catholic Church is the only true one the Mistress of Truth the Church, founded by Jesus Christ himself, which would last to the end of time, notwithstanding the persecutions of the infidel, and the rebellion of her own heretical children. He dedicates the Book to the Marquis Tanucci, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom, whom he praises for his zeal for Religion, and his vigorous execution of the laws against the vendors of infidel publications. He brings down the History from the days of the Apostles to his own time, concluding- with the Refutation of the Heresies of Father Berruyer.

I have added a Supplementary Chapter, giving- a succinct account of the Heretics and Fanatics of the last eighty years. It was, at first, my intention to make it more diffuse; but, then, I considered that it would be out of proportion with the remainder of the Work. This Book may be safely consulted, as a work of reference: the Author constantly quotes his authorities; and the Student of Ecclesiastical History can at once compare his statements with the sources from which he draws. In the latter portion of the Work, and especially in that portion of it, the most interesting- to us, the History of

the English Reformation, the Student may perceive some slight variations between the original text and my translation. I have collated the Work with the writings of modern Historians the English portion, especially with Hume and Lingard and wherever I have seen the statements of the Holy Author not borne out by the authority of our own Historians, I have considered it more prudent to state the facts, as they really took place; for our own writers must naturally be supposed to be better acquainted with our History, than the foreign authorities quoted by the Saint. The reader will also find the circumstances, and the names of the actors, when I considered it necessary, frequently given more in detail than in the original.

In the style, I have endeavoured, as closely as the genius of our language would allow, to keep to the original. St. Alphonsus never sought for ornament; a clear, lucid statement of facts is what he aimed at; there is nothing inflated in his writings; he wrote for the people, and that is the principal reason, I imagine, why not only his Devotional Works, but his Historical and Theological Writings, also, have been in such request: but, while he wrote for the people, we are not to imagine that he did not also please the learned. His mind was richly stored with various knowledge; he was one of the first Jurists of his day; his Theological science elicited the express approbation of the greatest Theologian of his age Benedict XIV.; he was not only a perfect master of his own beautiful language, but profoundly read in both Greek and Latin literature also, and a long life constantly employed in studies, chiefly ecclesiastical, qualified him, above any man of his time, to become an Ecclesiastical Historian, which no one should attempt unless he be a general I might almost say a universal, scholar : so much for the Historical portion of the Work.

In the Second Part, the Refutation of Heresies, the Holy Author comprises, in a small space, a vast amount of Theological information; in fact, there is no Heresy which cannot be refuted from it. Not alone are the usual Heresies, which we have daily to combat such as those opposed to the Real Presence, the Authority of the Church, the doctrine of Justification, clearly and diffusely refuted, but those abstruse heretical opinions concerning- Grace, Free Will, the Procession of the Holy Ghost, the Mystery of the Incarnation, and the two Natures of Christ, and so forth, are also clearly and copiously confuted; the intricacies of Pelagianism, Calvinism, and Jansenism, are unravelled, and the true Doctrine of the Church triumphantly vindicated. The reader will find, in general, the quotations from the Fathers in the original, but those unacquainted with Latin will eas-

ily learn their sentiments from the text. The Scripture quotations are from the Douay Version.

Every Theologian will be aware of the difficulty of giving- scholastic terms in an English dress. In the language of the Schools, the most abstract ideas, which would require a sentence to explain them in our tongue, are most appropriately expressed by a single word; all the Romance languages, daughters of the Latin, have very nearly the same facility, but our Northern tongue has not, I imagine, flexibility enough for the purpose. I have, however, endeavoured, as far as I could, to preserve the very terms of the original, knowing how easy it is to give a heterodox sense to a passage, by even the most trivial deviation from the very expression of the writer. The Theological Student will thus, I hope, find the Work a compact Manual of Polemic Theology; the Catholic who, while he firmly believes all that the Church teaches, wishes to be able to give an account of the Faith that is in him, will here find it explained and defended; while those not of the " fold," but for whom we ardently pray, that they may hear the voice of the " one Shepherd," may see, by its attentive perusal, that they inhabit a house " built upon the sand," and not the house " on the rock."

They will behold the mighty tree of Faith sprung from the grain of mustard-seed planted by our Redeemer, always flourishing always extending*, neither uprooted by the storms of persecution, nor withered by the sun of worldly prosperity. Nay more, the very persecution the Church of God has suffered, and is daily enduring, only extends it more and more; the Faithful, persecuted in " one city," fly elsewhere, bearing with them the treasure of Faith, and communicating it to those among- whom they settle, as the seeds of fertility are frequently borne on the wings of the tempest to the remote desert, which would otherwise be cursed with perpetual barrenness. The persecution of the Church in Ireland, for example, "has turned the desert into fruitfulness," in America, in Australia, in England itself, and the grey mouldering ruins of our fanes on the hill sides are compensated for by the Cathedral Churches across the ocean. The reader will see Heresy in every age, from the days of the Apostles themselves down to our own time, rising up, and vanishing after a while, but the Church of God is always the same, her Chief Pastors speaking with the same authority, and teaching the same doctrine to the trembling Neophytes in the Catacombs, and to the Csars on the throne of the world. Empires are broken into fragments and perish nations die away, and are only known to the historian languages spoken by millions disappear every thing that is mans work dies like man; heresies, like

the rest, have their rise, their progress, their decay, but Faith alone is eternal and unchangeable, "yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever."

Author's Preface

1. My object in writing this work is to prove that the Roman Catholic Church is the only true one among so many other Churches, and to show how carefully the Almighty guarded her, and brought her victoriously through all the persecutions of her enemies. Hence, as St. Irneus says (Lib. 3, cap. 3, n. 2), all should depend on the Roman Church as on their fountain and head. This is the Church founded by Jesus Christ, and propagated by the Apostles; and although in the commencement persecuted and contradicted by all, as the Jews said to St. Paul in Rome : " For as concerning this sect (thus they called the Church), we know that it is gainsayed every where" (Acts, xxviii, 22); still she always remained firm, not like the other false Churches, which in the beginning numbered many followers, but perished in the end, as we shall see in the course of this history, when we speak of the Arians, Nestorians, Eutychians, and Pelagians; and if any sect still reckons many followers, as the Mahometans, Lutherans, or Calvinists, it is easy to see that they are upheld, not by the love of truth, but either by popular ignorance, or relaxation of morals. St. Augustine says that heresies are only embraced by those who had they persevered in the faith, would be lost by the irregularity of their lives (St. Aug. de Va. Rel. c. 8.)
2. Our Church, on the contrary, notwithstanding that she teaches her children a law opposed to the corrupt inclinations of human nature, not only never failed in the midst of persecutions, but even gained strength from them; as Tertullian (Apol. cap. ult.) says, the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians, and the more we are mown down the more numerous we become; and in the 20th chapter of the same work he says, the kingdom of Christ and his reign is believed and he is worshipped by all nations. Pliny the Younger confirms this in his

celebrated Letter to Trajan, in which he says that in Asia the temples of the gods were deserted, because the Christian Religion had overrun not only the cities but even the villages.

3. This, certainly, never could have taken place without the power of the Almighty, who intended to establish in the midst of idolatry, a new religion, to destroy all the superstitions of the false religion, and the ancient belief in a multitude of false gods adored by the Gentiles, by their ancestors, by the magistrates, and by the emperors themselves, who made use of all their power to protect it, and still the Christian faith was embraced by many nations who forsook a relaxed law for a hard and difficult one, forbidding them to pamper their sensual appetites. What but the power of God could accomplish this?
4. Great as the persecutions were which the Church suffered from idolatry, still greater were those she had to endure from the heretics which sprang from her own bosom, by means of wicked men, who, either through pride or ambition, or the desire of sensual license, endeavoured to rend the bowels of their parent. Heresy has been called a canker : " It spreadeth like a canker" (II. Tim. ii, 17); for as a canker infects the whole body, so heresy infects the whole soul, the mind, the heart, the intellect, and the will. It is also called a plague, for it not only infects the person contaminated with it, but those who associate with him, and the fact is, that the spread of this plague in the world has injured the Church more than idolatry, and this good mother has suffered more from her own children than from her enemies. Still she has never perished in any of the tempests which the heretics raised against her; she appeared about to perish at one time through the heresy of Arius, when the faith of the Council of Nice, through the intrigues of the wicked Bishops, Valens and Ursacius, was condemned, and, as St. Jerome says, the world groaned at finding itself Arian (1); and the Eastern Church appeared in the same danger during the time of the heresies of Nestorius and Eutyches. But it is wonderful, and at the same time consoling, to read the end of all those heresies, and behold the bark of the Church, which appeared completely wrecked and sunk through the force of those persecutions, in a little while floating more gloriously and triumphantly than before.
5. St. Paul says: " There must be heresies, that they also who are reprov-

may be made manifest among you" (I. Cor. ii, 19). St. Augustine, explaining this text, says that as fire is necessary to purify silver, and separate it from the dross, so heresies are necessary to prove the good Christians among the bad, and to separate the true from the false doctrine. The pride of the heretics makes them presume that they know the true faith, and that the Catholic Church is in error, but here is the mistake : our reason is not sufficient to tell us the true faith, since the truths of Divine Faith are above reason; we should, therefore, hold by that faith which God has revealed to his Church, and which the Church teaches, which is, as the Apostle says, " the pillar and the ground of truth" (I. Tim. iii, 15).

(1) St. Hieron. Dial, adversus Lucifer.

Hence, as St. Irneus says, "It is necessary that all should depend on the Roman Church as their head and fountain; all Churches should agree with this Church on account of her priority of principality, for there the traditions delivered by the Apostles have always been preserved" (St. Iran, lib. 3, c. 3); and by the tradition derived from the Apostles which the Church founded at Rome preserves, and the Faith preserved by the succession of the Bishops, we confound those who through blindness or an evil conscience draw false conclusions (Ibid). " Do you wish to know," says St. Augustine, " which is the true Church of Christ? Count those priests who, in a regular succession have succeeded St. Peter, who is the Rock, against which the gates of hell will not prevail" (St. Aug. in Ps. contra part Donat.) : and the holy Doctor alleges as one of the reasons which detain him in the Catholic Church, the succession of Bishops to the present time in the See of St. Peter" (Epis. fund, c. 4, n. 5); for in truth the uninterrupted succession from the Apostles and disciples is characteristic of the Catholic Church, and of no other.

6. It was the will of the Almighty that the Church in which the true faith was preserved should be one, that all the faithful might profess the one faith, but the devil, St. Cyprian says (2), invented heresies to destroy faith, and divide unity. The enemy has caused mankind to establish many different churches, so that each, following the faith of his own particular one, in opposition to that of others, the true faith might be confused, and as many false faiths formed as there are different churches, or rather different individuals. This is especially the

case in England, where we see as many religions as families, and even families themselves divided in faith, each individual following his own. St. Cyprian, then, justly says that God has disposed that the true faith should be preserved in the Roman Church alone, so that there being but one Church there should be but one faith and one doctrine for all the faithful. St. Optatus Milevitanus, writing to Parmenianus, says, also : " You cannot be ignorant that the Episcopal Chair of St. Peter was first placed in the city of Rome, in which one chair unity is observed by all" (St. Opt. I 2, cont. Parmen.)

(2) St. Cyprian de Unitate Ecclesi.

7. The heretics, too, boast of the unity of their Churches, but St. Augustine says that it is unity against unity. " What unity," says the Saint, " can all those churches have which are divided from the Catholic Church, which is the only true one; they are but as so many useless branches cut off from the Vine, the Catholic Church, which is always firmly rooted. This is the One Holy, True, and Catholic Church, opposing all heresies; it may be opposed, but cannot be conquered. All heresies come forth from it, like useless shoots cut off from the vine, but it still remains firmly rooted in charity, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (St. Aug. lib. 1, de Symbol ad Cath. c. 6). St. Jerome says that the very fact of the heretics forming a church apart from the Roman Church, is a proof, of itself, that they are followers of error, and disciples of the devil, described by the Apostle, as " giving heed to spirits of error and doctrines of devils" (I. Tim. iv, 1).
8. The Lutherans and Calvinists say, just as the Donatists did before them, that the Catholic Church preserved the true faith down to a certain period some say to the third, some to the fourth, some to the fifth century but that after that the true doctrine was corrupted, and the spouse of Christ became an adulteress. This supposition, however, refutes itself; for, granting that the Roman Catholic Church was the Church first founded by Christ, it could never fail, for our Saviour himself promised that the gates of hell never should prevail against it : "I say unto you that you are Peter, and on this Rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt, xviii, 18). It being certain, then, that the Roman Catholic Church was the true one, as Gerard, one of the first ministers of Luther, admits (Gerard

de Eccles. cap. 11, sec. 6) it to have been for the first five hundred years, and to have preserved the Apostolic doctrine during that period, it follows that it must always have remained so, for the spouse of Christ as St. Cyprian says, could never become an adulteress.

9. The heretics, however, who, instead of learning from the Church the dogmas they should believe, wish to teach her false and perverse dogmas of their own, say that they have the Scriptures on their side, which are the fountain of truth, not considering, as a learned author (3) justly remarks, that it is not by reading, but by understanding, them, that the truth can be found. Heretics of every sort avail themselves of the Scriptures to prove their errors, but we should not interpret the Scripture according to our own private opinions, which frequently lead us astray, but according to the teaching of the Holy Church which is appointed the Mistress of true doctrine, and to whom God has manifested the true sense of the Divine books. This is the Church, as the Apostle tells us, which has been appointed the pillar and the ground of truth: *"that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of truth"* (I. Tim. iii, 15.) Hence St. Leo says that the Catholic faith despises the errors of heretics barking against the Church, who deceived by the vanity of worldly wisdom, have departed from the truth of the Gospel (St. Leo, Ser. 8, de Nat Dim.)
10. I think the History of Heresies is a most useful study, for it shows the truth of our Faith more pure and resplendent, by showing how it has never changed; and if, at all times, this is useful, it must be particularly so at present, when the most holy maxims and the principal dogmas of Religion are put in doubt : it shows, besides, the care God always took to sustain the Church in the midst of the tempests which were unceasingly raised against it, and the admirable manner in which all the enemies who attacked it were confounded. The History of Heresies is also useful to preserve in us the spirit of humility and subjection to the Church, and to make us grateful to God for giving us the grace of being born in Christian countries; and it shows how the most learned men have fallen into the most grievous errors, by not subjecting themselves to the Church's teaching.

(3) Danes, Gen. Temp. Nat. in Epil.

11. I will now state my reasons for writing this Work; some may think this labour of mine superfluous, especially as so many learned authors have written expressly and extensively the history of various heresies, as Tertullian, St. Irneus, St. Epiphanius, St. Augustine, St. Vincent of Lerins, Socrates, Sozymen, St. Philastrius, Theodoret, Nicephorus, and many others, both in ancient and modern times. This, however, is the very reason which prompted me to write this Work; for as so many authors have written, and so extensively, and as it is impossible for many persons either to procure so many and such expensive works, or to find time to read them, if they had them, I, therefore, judged it better to collect in a small compass the commencement and the progress of all heresies, so that in a little time, and at little expense, any one may have a sufficient knowledge of the heresies and schisms which infected the Church. I have said in a small compass, but still, not with such brevity as some others have done, who barely give an outline of the facts, and leave the reader dissatisfied, and ignorant of many of the most important circumstances. I, therefore, have studied brevity; but I wish, at the same time, that my readers may be fully informed of every notable fact connected with the rise and progress of, at all events, the principal heresies that disturbed the Church.
12. Another reason I had for publishing this Work was, that as modern authors, who have paid most attention to historical facts, have spoken of heresies only as a component part of Ecclesiastical History, as Baronius, Fleury, Noel Alexander, Tillemont, Orsi, Spondanus, Raynaldus, Graveson, and others, and so have spoken of each heresy chronologically, either in its beginning, progress, or decay, and, therefore, the reader must turn over to different parts of the works to find out the rise, progress, and disappearance of each heresy; I, on the contrary, give all at once the facts connected with each heresy in particular.
13. Besides, these writers have not given the Refutation of Heresies, and I give this in the second part of the Work; I do not mean the refutation of every heresy, but only of the principal ones, as those of Sabellius, Arius, Pelagius, Macedonius, Nestorius, Eutyches, the Monothelites, the Iconoclasts, the Greeks, and the like. I will merely speak of the authors of other heresies of less note, and their falsity will be apparent,

either from their evident weakness, or from the proofs I bring forward against the more celebrated heresies I have mentioned.

14. We ought, then, dear reader, unceasingly to thank our Lord for giving us the grace of being born and brought up in the bosom of the Catholic Church. St. Francis de Sales exclaims: *"O good God! many and great are the benefits thou hast heaped on me, and I thank thee for them; but how shall I be ever able to thank thee for enlightening me with thy holy Faith?"* And writing to one of his friends, he says: *"God! the beauty of thy holy Faith appears to me so enchanting, that I am dying with love of it, and I imagine I ought to enshrine this precious gift in a heart all perfumed with devotion."* St. Teresa never ceased to thank God for having made her a daughter of the Holy Church: her consolation at the hour of death was to cry out: *"I die a child of the Holy Church! I die a child of the Holy Church."* We, likewise, should never cease praising Jesus Christ for this grace bestowed on us one of the greatest conferred on us one distinguishing us from so many millions of mankind, who are born and die among infidels and heretics : *"He has not done in like manner to every nation"* (Psalm cxlvii, 9). With our minds filled with gratitude for so great a favour, we shall now see the triumph the Church has obtained through so many ages, over so many heresies opposed to her. I wish to remark, however, before I begin, that I have written this Work amidst the cares of my Bishoprick, so that I could not give a critical examination, many times, to the facts I state, and, in such case, I give the various opinions of different authors, without deciding myself on one side or the other. I have endeavoured, however, to collect all that could be found in the most correct and notable writers on the subject; but it is not impossible that some learned persons may be better acquainted with some facts than I am.

Chapter 1

Heresies of the First Century

Chapter 2

Heresies of the Second Century

Chapter 3

Heresies of the Third Century

Chapter 4

Heresies of the Fourth Century

Chapter 5

Heresies of the Fifth Century