

THE DOUBLE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH OF ROME..

BY THE EDITOR.

BEFORE me lies a little book entitled *The Double Doctrine of the Church of Rome* by Baroness von Zedtwitz, one of the Caldwell sisters who founded and endowed the Catholic university at Washington. It contains an account of the author's reasons for renouncing her allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church to which she and her sister from their early childhood had been zealously devoted. In addition to the general interest of such a statement we have a private reason which claims our attention because about twenty-five years ago the editor of *The Open Court* happened to know these ladies and could not help admiring the earnestness of their faith which shone through all their words and acts. At that time they showed an anxiety to procure for the Roman Catholic Church an institution of learning that would be of the same high standing as the best of any Protestant denomination. They furnished the funds for a university of which the first rector was the scholarly and liberal Bishop Kane, one of the most prominent figures in the Religious Parliament, but he was not suffered long in his position, for he was called to Rome and the administration of the university passed into other hands.

Since then years have passed, and in the meantime both sisters have turned Protestants, first Baroness Zedtwitz and then the Marquise des Monstiers Merinville, and the little book before me proves that they took this step after due consideration—in fact after a great struggle and very reluctantly.

The bulk of the book is rather historical and shows much acquaintance with theological literature. Its arguments would perhaps not be considered of great importance, for similar statements have often been made by critics of the Catholic Church, but the

preface is more impressive and proves that we have to deal here with a strong personality who, with the best intentions to accept the Roman Catholic faith, was obliged to rebel against ecclesiastical authority and work her way out into freedom. If the two Caldwell sisters had lived in obscurity, if they had not been thrown into intimate association with the prelates of the church, if they had never gone to Rome and become acquainted with the inner ring of church politics, or as Baroness Zedtwitz calls it, "esoteric catholicism," they might both have remained good Catholics to this day. The Baroness says: "I found myself at last an admitted member in church politics, and at the source and heart of esoteric catholicism."

But she was disappointed. Her own case reminds her of Luther who lost his implicit confidence in the papacy after he had been in Rome (p. 12).

The author's reasons for publishing the book in the United States are stated as follows:

"Owing to the extreme hostile attitude assumed by the Roman church in this country, towards my decision, and its persistent efforts to, at first, deny, and then belittle the sincerity of my renunciation of their system, I have found it necessary to resort to the only way of silencing the voices of those who persistently spread the report that I have never completely severed my connection with the church of Rome." And she adds (p. 16), "my decision is irrevocable."

In her younger years she must have seen much that was irreconcilable with the lofty principles of Christianity, yet she clung to the Catholic church. She says: "In childhood and early girlhood, without palliating the unchristian conduct of almost all the prelates with whom I came in contact, I never ceased to hope and believe that when womanhood had ripened my judgment, the apparent inconsistencies would be fully explained and the truth become evident to me."

Her sojourn in Rome tended to confirm the change in her opinion of that church which she had "always believed 'Holy,'" but, she says, "the voice of conscience became ever louder, and finally drowned the superstitious fear which held me back from the step I knew I must take. . . . Revolt was the inevitable result of my search for enlightenment, and I struggled to be free; but from the desert waste of esoteric catholicism but few can find the true path back to Christianity, and mine was a long and dreary search."

Baroness Zedtwitz has not become an unbeliever. On the contrary it is her Christianity which has asserted itself, but she has come to the conviction that Catholicism and Christianity are not the same. She is well aware of the fact that there are many pious souls in the

fold of the church but they become tools in the hands of the curia and are cunningly used to deceive the world about the real character of Rome. She says: "It were folly to suppose Rome so blind to her own interests as not to perceive the need of saintliness within her fold, and amongst the uninitiated members of the church, numbering both humble priests and laymen, are to be found types of the truest, purest Christians. Such make unconsciously the propaganda of Rome. They nurse the sick, dispense charity to the poor, profess and know of no other doctrine than the Gospels of Jesus Christ. Of the corruptions in Roman ecclesiastical administration, and in church politics they are wholly unaware. It is to them that Rome points as living proofs of the work she is achieving for humanity, knowing well that through ignorance alone they remain in her communion."

In a similar tone the Baroness speaks of the priests. She recognizes that there is "a restricted class of men who have, through a highly developed spirituality, reached that level where they can begin to realize the possibilities of the super-man." They are the exceptions, for, says our author, "It will scarcely be maintained by the most partisan Roman Catholic, that the obligations placed on the priesthood are never violated."

She discusses in her book the quarrel of the Jesuits with the Jansenists and criticises the perverted moral teachings of the officially recognized doctors of the church among whom Alphonsus de Liguori with his work on moral theology ranges very high; and yet this man justifies equivocation or quibbling which just falls short of direct lying, if the deceiving be done for "a just cause." As an instance of a trick by which a lie may be justified through a mental reservation she selects the following: "A man asked if a particular thing be true, which he knows to be true, but does not wish to admit, may lawfully reply: 'I say, No,' meaning thereby only, 'I utter the word, No,' and not, 'I declare that the thing did not happen.'"

We will not enter into further details because similar instances of Liguori and other theologians have frequently been collected and published.

An important point which our author has made, is that the principles of Rome do not encourage the building up of a strong character. They prefer what has been called "moral adaptability" which would be lenient to those who show love of power and wealth and allow an elastic conscience. Even simony is tolerated on the condition that spiritual motives are decisive and that the motive of bribery should not be in the foreground. Baroness Zedtwitz believes that the influence of Romanism is baneful. She says:

"Wherever Rome has had preponderant influence in a country or is gaining in power, a certain specific type of mind and character is developed, however different the races who assume it may be in other respects from one another. It is characterized by a large "moral adaptability," for there is nothing so detestable to Rome as a cast-iron character and an inflexible moral code. . . . The love of power and wealth are motives which Rome can use and manipulate. Liberty in any form she is impotent to handle."

The book of Baroness Zedtwitz is certainly a remarkable document written by one who has sincerely tried to live up to and continue in the faith of the Roman Catholic church and yet has failed. The question is whether Rome will heed the signs of the time and whether Romanism¹ will by and by die out and let the spirit of true catholicism prevail in the church. Among the prelates whom Baroness Zedtwitz has met there are those also who feel that there is something wrong, and some of them long for a reform. She says:

"Disaffection is already found even amongst the members of the hierarchy; men of learning, some of them sincere, zealous, earnest in the cause of humanity, are awakening from their delusions."

We have no doubt whatever that the Pope himself is honest and that he tries his best to fill the high office to which he has been called. But the great question is, Does he possess the insight and is he truly aware of the gravity of the situation.

It is reported that when he is confronted with an unexpected reversal of his plans which now and then happens to him, he is in the habit of exclaiming *Deus providebit*, "God will dispose of it"; and the Pope's confidence in God is perhaps well founded, though it may be in another and a broader sense than he thinks. The God of history leads mankind onward, and the very mistakes men make must often serve to bring about the ends which he has in view and which his worshipers in their blindness try to avoid.

¹The distinction between Romanism and catholicism has been brought out in an editorial in the November number under the title "*Deus Providebit*."