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THE CHURCHES AS MORAL COURTS OF THE FRONTIER

William Warren Sweet

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OF THE CHURCH

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BOOK REVIEWS

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THE CHURCHES AS MORAL COURTS OF THE FRONTIER ¹

WILLIAM W. SWEET

The University of Chicago

We Americans have been inclined to over-idealize the frontier period of our history, and have been perhaps too ready to resent any implication of unwonted moral laxity among the pioneers. It is now universally known that the great majority of the people who colonized the Atlantic seaboard came from the lower stratum of European society, and only a comparatively few represented the best in education and culture. Throughout the entire colonial period, at least until the colonial Awakenings, the great mass of the lower classes were little influenced by organized religion, and only a very small proportion of the total population of the thirteen colonies were members of the colonial churches. At the end of the colonial period there were undoubtedly more unchurched people in North America, in proportion to the population, than were to be found in any other land in Christendom.

It is also well known that the Revolution, together with the two decades following, was a period of religious and moral deadness throughout the United States. Never was religion at such low ebb. Among the churches in America the Episcopalian had undoubtedly suffered most as a result of the Revolution. Many of its chief supporters had been loyalists, and during the conflict they had been proscribed, and following the war were under both a political and social ban. Just to belong to the old established church in the years immediately following the Revolution was enough in itself to mark one as a suspicious character. Such rabid opposition to the Episcopalians, it is true, soon subsided, but it subsided largely because it was generally considered that as a sect it was

¹ The presidential address, delivered at the meeting of the Society in New York on December 27, 1932.

CARDINAL BELLARMINE—NOW SAINT AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

DAVID S. SCHAFF

Washington, D. C.

Cardinal Bellarmine, the chief controversialist who has written against Protestantism, has within less than fifteen months been elevated to the two highest ecclesiastical dignities conferred within the Roman communion upon the dead. He was declared to be a saint on June 29, 1930, and a Doctor of the Church—*doctor ecclesiae*—on September 17, 1931. Five years before, the same dignities had been conferred on Peter Canisius, likewise a member of the Society of Jesus and in the latter half of the sixteenth century next to Bellarmine the leading literary opponent of the "Lutheran rebellion",—words used by Pius XI in his bulls of canonization.

The appraisal of Bellarmine as a saint will be made in the light of his own definition that, in creating a saint, the pope is infallible¹—for were this not the case, the worshipper would have no guarantee that his worship is properly directed. As a Doctor of the Church, the cardinal must be judged by the moral and theological opinions set forth in his works. Altars may be reared to a saint without regard to locality. To a Doctor of the Church belongs the highest religious authority next to the authority of the Scriptures and tradition, as interpreted by the Church.

It is probable that no Roman Catholic writer since the Reformation has excelled Bellarmine both in the mastery of his subject and in his permanent influence. Next to the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas, Bellarmine's *Disputations* is the most imposing volume setting forth the Roman system of government and theology. It is also probable, that with Thomas and the modern writer on morals, Alphonso de Liguori, Bellarmine has had a predominant part in defining the distinctive theology of the Roman Catholic Church. With the historian Baronius, he was the most scholarly and commanding writer of his century on the Roman side. As cardinals they sat together on committees—Congregations—in Rome. The ponderous work of Baronius is a magnificent credit to historical study, although Protestants may prefer the *Magdeburg Centuries*

¹ *De sanc. beat.* 1. 9.

against which he wrote. Bellarmine, the polemist, wielded a sword on which no rust has gathered. It is probable that within the Society of Jesus he is regarded as the most illustrious member of that order next to its founder and Francis Xavier. By our own Cotton Mather he was called "the last Goliath of the Philistines".

The leading events in Cardinal Bellarmine's life are given in the *Autobiography* written when he was seventy-one and including a short appendix added later. The manuscript was first published in Rome in 1675 in connection with the proceedings of the cardinal's canonization, again in Louvain in 1753, and in Ferrara in 1762. In 1887 the Latin text was published by Döllinger-Reusch together with a German translation and copious historical notes. Up to that time, so these writers say, the *Autobiography* was known only in restricted circles. The publication was one of the very last works in which Döllinger had a part. He died in 1890. The following notices of Bellarmine's career are taken from the *Autobiography*, with a few additions from Bartoli, one of Bellarmine's early biographers.

The Italian Roberto Bellarmino, who lived seventy-nine years (1542-1621), was by his own account of low stature—*parvae staturae*—and of a constitution which not infrequently gave way to weakness. At five or six years of age he preached, clad in a linen gown. At fifteen he was giving religious addresses in his native village, Montepolitiano. A year later he determined to forsake the world and in 1560 was taken into the Jesuit Society at Rome. In the years that followed he was a devoted member of that body. Even during his studies and before he received the tonsure he engaged much in preaching, having on account of his height to stand on a stool in the pulpit. For twenty years he lectured in Louvain and the *Collegium Romanum*; he was appointed cardinal in 1599 and several years later archbishop of Capua. He spent the last eighteen years of his career in Rome as the adviser of popes and an active member of Congregations. He read almost all the Fathers and many of the Schoolmen. Thomas Aquinas was his prime authority in his study and lecture room. In his earlier years, as he is careful to note, he composed many poems, some of which were affixed to church doors. After three years spent in the *Collegium Romanum*, he was sent to Florence where he continued his studies, taught and preached. In that city, "although unbearded", as he wrote, he was obliged to occupy the pulpit for the vesper service on Sundays and festival days. One of his preaching experiences occurred when he was on a brief visit to Camaldoli. The "major" or general, made him preach against his will and "though he was

a young man", he preached with such power that "the venerable fathers" listened attentively and went up after the service to kiss his hand. From Florence Bellarmine was sent to Mondovi, Piedmont. At an inn on the way, the wife of the inn keeper insisted that he was the long-absent husband of her daughter, and a fellow lodger accused him of stealing his purse. These events determined Bellarmine never thereafter to travel unaccompanied. At Mondovi he was expected to explain Greek authors, but he himself knew scarcely anything about Greek beyond the alphabet. In an incredibly short time he gained such a knowledge of the language that he was able to lecture on the original Greek texts. He was next sent to Padua (1567) to pursue his theological studies. There, too, he was called upon to preach as at Mondovi. On one occasion, when he was called upon suddenly and had a very large audience before him—*maxima frequentia auditorum*—he used one of Basil's discourses almost entire, "knowing", as he relates, that "in that audience there would not be many who would be able to detect the theft"—*furtum*—or, as Döllinger translates it, plagiarism.

After a year spent in Padua, the young student was sent to Louvain, meeting on the way William Allen, later made cardinal. He spent seven years at the Belgian university, preaching the first year, preaching and lecturing the next five years, and on account of his health only lecturing the seventh year. He reports that he was told that many were led by his sermons to return to the Church or were for the first time converted. In 1572, while at Louvain, he took the four Jesuitical vows and received ordination as deacon and priest from Cornelius Jansen, whose heresy later agitated the Roman Church. Bellarmine was the first Jesuit to be permitted to lecture in the renowned university. In order to study the Old Testament in the original, he mastered Hebrew in such a short time that there was no longer ground for disputing Jerome who said that Blaesilla had learned Hebrew not in "a few months but days". When the Prince of Orange threatened Louvain, Bellarmine and his fellow Jesuits, two by two, escaped from the city after cutting their hair so as to conceal the tonsure and dressed in laical clothes. Partly as a relief to his health, he was ordered to Rome in 1576. There he taught in the *Collegium Romanum* eleven years and occupied the place of its rector not quite three years. His close association with the Roman pontiffs began in 1597 under Clement VIII as consultor of the Holy Office. Of that pope he made one of his famous predictions which he relates at some length. When Clement had been on the throne five years and his death

was expected in the near future, Bellarmine prophesied that the pope would reign twelve years and twelve months; and 'so it turned out to the amazement of those who had scoffed when the prophecy was made.' Some time before, he had predicted that Sixtus V would die at a time when that pontiff was in good health.

In 1599 Bellarmine was given the red hat—*rubeum biretum*—an honor which he assures us he tried in every way to escape and which he accepted only after Clement had "commanded him to accept on pain of mortal sin". In accepting, he made a promise to himself not to use the dignity for gain or the enrichment of relatives. However, Bartoli relates that the cardinal helped some of them. In 1602 he was made archbishop of Capua, an office he filled for three years. He says that "he was loved by the people and he loved them and was known as a servant of God". Giving up his diocese and returning to Rome at the pope's command in 1605, he was for the rest of his life one of the most active members of the curia. In two conclaves he was voted upon for the tiara and in one case came close to receiving it—*paulim abfuit quin fieret papa*. While the conclaves were being held, he "prayed mightily to the Lord to be delivered from the papacy" and said that he would not lift a straw to get the office. Bartoli notes, basing his statement upon a writing left by Bellarmine, that the cardinal promised "in the sight of the Virgin Mary and the whole heavenly host that, if he were elected pope, he would not raise any of his relatives to the sacred college or to civil dignities such as prince and duke".² During this period spent in Rome, he was accustomed to spend the month of September 'in retreat to clear himself of the dust with which in consequence of his many activities he was more or less covered and to prepare to give account of his stewardship to God.' He was a member of the Congregations of the Holy Office, the Index of Forbidden Books, Sacred Rites, Indulgences and de Propaganda Fide.

In closing the main part of the *Autobiography*, Bellarmine wrote: "Of virtues I have said nothing because I am not certain that I have any. In regard to vices, I have been silent because they do not deserve to be written down; and Oh, that they may be found blotted out from God's book on the day of judgment!" In

² Praising this resolution, Döllinger-Reusch give some examples of nepotism under Paul V (1605-21), and his two immediate successors. Paul made a young nephew cardinal and lifted two brothers to the highest civil positions in Rome. Gregory XV, three days after his election, made a nephew cardinal, and Urban VIII made three nephews cardinals, one at the age of eighteen. These three men, at Urban's death, had to flee from the city, so bad were their reputations.

the brief appendix to the *Autobiography*, Bellarmine reports the part he had taken to secure the canonization of Ignatius Loyola and Aloysius of Gonzaga and his attitude to Luis Molina. Before his death, so the Jesuit Valdasi relates, the pope visited Bellarmine, and reports that "some say that the cardinal gave one half of his heart to Jesus and the other half to Mary". His body lies in the original grave of Ignatius Loyola in the church al Gesu in Rome.

The work on which Bellarmine's literary and ecclesiastical fame rests, the *Disputationes de controversiis fidei adversus hujus temporis haereticos*, has been the armory from which the more recent Roman Catholic controversialists, writing in English, as Milner, Archbishop Spalding, and Cardinal Gibbons have drawn. It appeared in three volumes (1586-1592), the first volume being dedicated to Sixtus V, who ordered it placed on the *Index* (1590) on account of the author's treatment of the pope's power in civil affairs. However, by order of the cardinals it did not appear in the *Index* of 1596. The voluminous work defends all the articles of the Council of Trent and, in addition, the dogma of papal infallibility, it being not possible, as Bellarmine put it, for the Roman pontiff to err—*nullo casu errare potest*. Beginning with chapters on "The Word of God, Written and Unwritten", "Christ, the Head of the Whole Church" and the "Supreme Pontiff, Head of the Whole Militant Church", the author proceeds, in a method which in exhaustiveness reminds one of Thomas Aquinas, to treat of all theological subjects down to redemption and the final state. He quotes from the writings of Wyclif, Marsiglius of Padua, Luther, Calvin and other church Reformers, and refutes them in detail. Other writings bearing especially upon the pope's authority in civil matters and to be consulted with the *Disputations*, are his five Latin tracts written during the controversy of Paul V with Venice over the right of states to deal with the property of religious orders; further, his tract addressed to the Scotchman Barclay, and the tracts he wrote in the controversy with James I bearing on the authority of the church over princes. In his *Commentary on the Psalms*, published in 1611, Bellarmine declared that when the Vulgate disagrees with the original Hebrew and Greek texts, the Vulgate readings are to be preferred, a position he also took in the *Disputations* and in a work on the Vulgate for the first time published in 1749. His *Catechism* was ordered by Clement VIII to be used in Rome and its use was later extended to mission lands by papal authority. In the department of practical theology, Bellarmine wrote the *Ascent of the Mind to God*

and other tracts which have been translated into English. Eighty-seven of his sermons appeared in Cologne in 1615.

The century in which Bellarmine was active with his pen and in the lecture-room was the second period in the desperate struggle going on for religious mastery in Western Europe. The positions he filled in Louvain—near the Rheims-Douai seminary of the English Recusants—during the heat of the contest between Spain and the Dutch patriots, and in Rome, gave him the opportunity to know at first hand the plans of popes and the Roman Catholic princes and to follow the stages of the struggle. He was four years old when Luther died and twenty-two at Calvin's death. When the Council of Trent adjourned in 1563, he was twenty-one and at the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day, thirty. He was able to follow intelligently the events of Elizabeth's entire reign and lived through eighteen years of the reign of James I. He was in full manhood when the Inquisition was being applied in the Lowlands and Philip II was preparing the Armada. He saw fourteen pontiffs sit on the papal throne, and when he entered the Society of Jesus, Ignatius Loyola had been dead only four years.

The movement to raise Cardinal Bellarmine to the dignity of a saint of the Church was started by the Jesuits almost immediately after his death, and the formal opening of the proceedings looking toward that end—*introductio causae*—was authorized by Urban VIII in 1627. By a subsequent decree Urban postponed canonizations till fifty years after the decedent's death. By special dispensation the decree was set aside by Alexander VII in 1651 in Bellarmine's favor. During the three centuries which elapsed before his actual canonization, the process was again and again dropped and then resumed. In 1674, the Congregation of Rites pronounced his writings free from anything contravening the faith, but three years later (1677) a number of its members and three of the Consultors of the Congregation denied that Bellarmine possessed the "heroic virtues" in sufficient degree to warrant going on with the process. In 1711 the proceedings were resumed, hundreds of petitions having been received from the heads of orders, bishops, princes and others calling for their resumption. By the demand of the "promotor", Cardinal Lambertini, afterwards Benedict XIV, (1740-1758), Bellarmine's letters, poems and other writings not previously examined were entered for scrutiny. The case was stopped when four members of the Congregation voted against canonization and word came that if favorable action were taken, the decree would be resisted in France. The Jesuit

Society was abolished in 1773 by papal decree. It had hardly been recognized again when under Leo XII (1827) the case was reopened. In general, the charges made against the cardinal in the Congregation of Rites were inaccuracies in his writings, ambition and perjury and also, as by Cardinal Passionei under Benedict XIV, false teaching in regard to the authority of the pope over states. According to the *Acts of the Apostolic See* for 1921, the Congregation of Rites was at that time still discussing whether Bellarmine possessed in "heroic degree—the theological virtues of prudence, justice, courage, and temperance". In 1923 it was discussing the miracles ascribed to the cardinal and the same year he was made Venerable. Not till 1930 was the vote cast for his canonization and on June 29th of that year Pius XI issued the decree placing Bellarmine among the "celestial saints" together with Breboeuf, Jogues, and other Jesuit martyrs of the Canada mission. The decree, covering eleven pages, appeared in the *Acts of the Apostolic See*, December 31, 1930.

The encyclical of Pius XI opened with the assurance that "the light whereby the learned have led many to righteousness, who shine as stars to the perpetual centuries, seems to have flashed forth with new splendor in the Blessed Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino". As the most vigorous champion of Catholic truth—so it goes on—he most mightily defended Mother Church against "the wicked devices of the heretics" and is a brilliant light of the Society of Jesus, the purpled fathers and the episcopate. After reciting the leading events in his career, the pontiff emphasized the merits of the *Disputations* in which the saint is said to have refuted the errors of Luther, Calvin, and other innovators which were committing havoc—*grassabantur*—in parts of Europe. He also commended Bellarmine's "golden" *Compendium of Christian Doctrine* and spoke of the part he had taken in amending the text of the Sistine Vulgate. Pius further says that Bellarmine had followed Thomas Aquinas as "his leader and teacher" and was properly called by Benedict XIV "*malleus haereticorum*". The two miracles adduced in the bull were the cures of a Spanish lad who suffered with peritonitis and a Hungarian lad who had pulmonary lesion. When the cardinal's sacred corpse was placed in the church at Gesu, a "vast multitude" pressed forward to touch the saint's clothes and kiss his hands and feet, and so great at that time was the fame of Bellarmine's sanctity that all with one accord called Robert holy. Again praising Bellarmine for battling against the innovators of the sixteenth century as "did Peter Canisius, a fellow

member of the Jesuit Society", Pius closed with expressing the hope that through Bellarmine's intercession at the heavenly throne the words would be fulfilled that "there shall be one fold and one shepherd" and with warning "all at the peril of incurring God's wrath and the wrath of the Apostles Peter and Paul not to presume to resist the decree".

The decree placing Bellarmine among the Doctors of the Church³ speaks of him as among "the most illustrious by doctrine and sanctity whom God had given to the Church" and quotes Clement VIII as saying that "so far as doctrine goes, the Church had scarcely seen his equal". Pius again calls him "*malleus haereticorum*" and commends him for his services as a member of the most fruitful Society of Jesus, also for his humility and his liberality to the poor. He praised his work on the Psalms and his Catechism, "which for three centuries had been in an eminent degree food for the faithful"—*pabulum fidei populo*—and especially the *Disputations*, in which were cast down the errors "making havoc of the Church" and which were based upon the author's study of Thomas Aquinas. In his own day and down to the present day, Bellarmine—so the pope continued—had been called the "Master of Controversialists". He defended the pope's infallible teaching office, and his writings were much used at the time of the Vatican Council by the fathers. "As a star sheds its rays far and near, so the cardinal dispensed truth in all directions, as was apparent to all men of goodwill". Not only had members of the Society of Jesus sought his elevation to the doctorate, but also the most famous men of all grades of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. As a Doctor of the Church, Bellarmine thus was placed at the side of Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, and Gregory the Great—whom Boniface VIII had so honored—as well as with the twenty others made doctors since. It may not seem unreasonable to suppose that in conferring within the brief space of five or six years the honors of saint and doctor upon the Cardinal and Peter Canisius, dead for three centuries, Pius XI was not unmindful of the Malines Conversations then going on and of the evidences of a coöperative spirit among Protestants shown in the conventions at Stockholm, Jerusalem, and Lausanne. Two of the reasons given for honoring the two Jesuits were that they were mighty assailants of Protestantism and hammers of the heretics, "having defended Catholic truth, fixed in the seat of St. Peter as on the corner-stone" and

³ *Acts of the Apostolic See* for 1931, pp. 433-438.

were devoted members of the Society of Jesus, Protestantism's determined opponent.

No longer may Bellarmine's position be disputed in the Roman communion. Outside of it, there may be a justifiable disposition on the ground of the cardinal's own statements in his *Autobiography* and *Disputations* to hesitate in regarding him as a saint while living or a doctor of theology reliable in all points. His occasional offences against the "theological and cardinal virtues" seem to be above reasonable question, and certain propositions which he laid down, certainly at variance with modern opinion, can hardly be looked upon with favor in the Roman communion itself. Some of the reasons for these charges are the following.

As already indicated, Bellarmine taught that the Vulgate, where it differs from the original texts, is to be preferred to them. He knew that the Hebrew text of Gen. 3.15 reads: "*It shall bruise thy head*"; and yet he declared that the feminine form of the Vulgate is "not an improbable reading". In the cardinal's defense, it may be said that he was true to the Tridentine statement which forbids the "rejection of the Vulgate text on any pretext whatever".

He declared that Mary's perpetual virginity must be believed although there is in the Scriptures nothing about it—*de hac re nullum est in scripturis*. The doctrine of the immaculate conception he pronounced a "probable and pious opinion", yet not an article of faith—*de fide*. Pius IX (1854) charged those denying the dogma as "making shipwreck of the faith, and as having fallen away from the unity of the Church".

Bellarmino held the monastic vow to be so sacred that the religious who break it and marry commit a greater evil than if they fornicate, on the ground that in marrying the religious make themselves incapable of performing their vow—a thing which they who fornicate do not do—*est majus malum nubere quam fornicare*, etc.

Defending the positions of the Schoolmen, he consigned to the *limbus infantum* all infants dying in infancy unbaptized, and there they abide for ever and ever as the penalty of original sin which baptism washes away. This harsh mediaeval judgment was reaffirmed as recently as 1912 in the *Catechism* of Pius X which says that all such infants go to limbo—*senza battesimo vanno al limbo*—"because having original sin they merit neither paradise nor purgatory nor yet do they deserve hell", meaning by hell the lowest part of the infernal realm. The punishment of hell Bellar-

mine preferred to think of as material flames. As for purgatory, he affirmed that no one can tell how long detention in it lasts. The case of Innocent III put him 'in great fear, for after being in purgatory four hundred years and having narrowly escaped hell, Innocent appeared all encompassed in flames to St. Lutgard and begged the saint to pray for his release'.

The cardinal approved the religious wars waged against the Albigenses and the Lutherans, placing war against heretics in the same category as war against the Turks.⁴

Exemption of ecclesiastics and of ecclesiastical property from the civil tribunal he based on divine as well as canon law.⁵ As a divine appointment, it follows the laws of the soul's superiority over the body and the parents' superiority over their children.

The destiny of heretics is a dismal one. On earth they have misery and "are on the sure way to hell". Like sheep which have wandered from the fold and soldiers who have deserted the ranks, they are properly subjected to forcible and punitive measures by the Church. The faithful have no more right to leave the Church than a monk has the right to renounce his vow. Within the Catholic Church—so Bellarmine allowed—some have been bad; but among the heretics "there is no one good, no, not one". Heretics deserve death and incorrigible heretics are to be put to death. One of the reasons given by the cardinal for the death penalty for such offenders was that they do more harm to their neighbors than other pirates and robbers. The cardinal had some experience of the execution of his doctrine. He was a member of the Holy Office when sentence was passed upon Bruno that led to his death by fire, and he signed the warrant by which Fulgentii Manfredi (1610) was turned over to the civil arm, suffering death in the flames five days later. Gibbins in his *Were Heretics Ever Burnt Alive in Rome?* (1852) gave a facsimile of Bellarmine's signature.

Bellarmino brought monstrous charges against the moral conduct of the Protestant Reformers and of their experiences in dying, putting them in a category with Jezebel, Pharaoh, Herod, Nero, and Domitian. In opposition to this wicked group he set the happy records of Abraham, Moses, Constantine, Theodosius, and Justinian, "so long as Justinian remained true to the Catholic faith". To Luther he ascribed death by suicide; Calvin died invoking the devil and being eaten up with worms. Fortunately the

⁴ *De laicis*, XIV, XV.

⁵ *De membris ecclesiae*, I, 28.

story of Luther's suicide in Eisleben, after having been repeated again and again, has at last been shown to be untrue by the Catholic historian Paulus on evidence that is unimpeachable. Luther Bellarmine compared with Mohamet, the one Satan's prime agent in the East, the other in the West, the monk, however, outstripping in wickedness the Arabian prophet. While Luther held the gates of hell wide open, multitudes passed into that dark realm. Nor in heaven or purgatory did he leave anything untouched. Heaven he robbed of the Trinity, Christ of His divinity, the saints of their purity. Purgatory he sought to root up altogether. As for the Church on earth, he robbed it of the Scriptures, the sacraments, and holy days. It would certainly seem to a Protestant that the charges which Bellarmine brought against the Protestant Reformers make him ineligible for the titles of saint and doctor. If he was unreliable in taking wild rumors for facts, he was equally unfair in his record of happenings during the religious struggles between Protestants and Roman Catholics. To give an example, he noted as an evidence of the divine favor to Catholics that Charles V "whipped" the Lutherans, but at the same time is silent in regard to the Emperor's rout suffered in 1547 and the sack of Rome by his army twenty years earlier. The fate of the Armada he also passes by.

There would seem to be no possible ground of doubt that in an important ecclesiastical juncture, Cardinal Bellarmine told falsehoods and openly boasted of having done so. Perhaps his use of Basil's sermon, believing that the sermon was not known to his auditors, may be explained away as not a "theft". In an altogether different category belong his misrepresentations in regard to the Vulgate text issued by Sixtus V. When the cardinal describes his course at length in the *Autobiography*, it seems never to have occurred to him that he was violating the common law of veracity. In brief, the circumstances were these.

Sixtus V, concerned to carry out the suggestion made at Trent that an authentic edition of the Vulgate be prepared, set himself to the task. In 1590 his edition appeared in three volumes, together with a bull dated March, 1589, which pronounced the text "true, valid, accurate above question and to be used in all private and public discussions". In issuing the text, the pontiff affirmed that he had done so as Peter's successor and with God's assistance, and he threatened with the penalties of the Church any one venturing to tamper with it. The edition created a great scandal in Rome and abroad by its many mistakes. To follow Bellarmine's

Autobiography, "when in 1591 Gregory XIV was thinking of what should be done with the Bible prepared by Sixtus V, an edition in which there were very many changes for the worse—*per multa perperam*—some men of repute advised that the use of that Bible should be publicly forbidden. But, in the pontiff's presence, I proved that that Bible must not be prohibited but corrected, and in such a way that when the book appeared in corrected form, Pope Sixtus' honor should be saved—*salvo honore Sixti V*. That result could be brought about if the changes, badly made, were rectified at the earliest possible moment and the Bible printed under Sixtus' own name, preceded by a Preface stating that in Sixtus' first edition, on account of haste, certain errors had crept in, whether due to the type-setters or others". The account of this advice the cardinal follows with an account of the preparation of the new edition, in which he took a large part. The revised edition appeared in the reign of Clement VIII (1592) under the name of Sixtus V together with a Preface written by Bellarmine himself. By his advice and part in the whole transaction—he congratulated himself—he had "recompensed Sixtus good for evil", for that pope had placed his *Disputations* on the *Index* on account of its proposition in regard to the pope's direct dominion over all the earth, a decision which was to remain in force till the book was corrected. "However, when that pontiff died, the Congregation of Sacred Rites ordered my name erased from the book of the *Index*".

By his own admission, the cardinal's purpose was to deceive, and he boasted of the part which he had taken in arranging for the deception to be carried out. Sixtus in his bull had declared that in order to send out an edition free of mistakes, he had with his own hand corrected the mistakes of the printers. In his Preface to the edition of 1592, Bellarmine told further untruth when he said that Sixtus' original edition had not been offered to the public. On the contrary, it had been sent to some princes, and Clement VIII called upon the Jesuits to secure copies of it as they might be able and to send them to Rome where, according to Döllinger-Reusch, eleven copies are known to exist. Objections had been raised in Venice against the accuracy of the Sistine text, a position which could not have been taken if the text had not been issued.⁶

⁶ Sixtus' bull was made by Döllinger (1870) one of the historic arguments against papal infallibility. However, that other notable Catholic historian, Pastor, in the German edition of his *History of the Popes*, vol. X, 158 sqq., 590 sqq., sought to prove that the bull and its issuance lacked certain formalities—*Förmlichkeiten*—and for this reason it belongs not to the class of infallible utterances. Pastor had rescued Innocent VIII's bull calling for the punishment of witches in Germany

Over against Bellarmine's position may be placed the position of Wyclif, who was to the cardinal a heretic, that a lie is never justifiable but always a sin—*omne mendacium est per se peccatum*.

As for the grace of humility, Bellarmine's references to his preaching and its effects make us suspicious that he did not have it in a heroic degree. His atrocious charges against the Reformers may be perhaps excused on the ground that the cardinal lived three centuries ago and not in our own time whose canons call for a fair if not a generous treatment of dissenters. Among the curious or comical reasons given in the curia for Bellarmine's canonization was "his heroic faith, yea his seraphic love"—virtues alleged to have been shown by Bellarmine in writing and issuing the *Disputations*. Cardinal Passionei, who vigorously opposed the canonization, mentions as one of the pleas in favor of the cardinal's heroic virtues that many were converted by the *Disputations*, as the Prince of Bavaria had affirmed, and that in England a professorship was established to controvert the work. But who could go further than Bellarmine's biographer Bartoli who sought to prove that Bellarmine had been innocent since the time of his baptism!

Without claiming that the propositions on "power", that is government, which Cardinal Bellarmine laid down have a bearing on his sainthood or his right to be placed among the Doctors of the Church, it is at least interesting to know that of the three forms of government, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, he regarded monarchy as the best and democracy as the very worst—*deterri-mum regimen*. His theory that papal authority over princes and nations is "indirect" involves no difference in the result obtained by the papal act. On the theory that the pope's authority is "direct", the pope acts as a civil ruler. On the theory that it is "indirect", he acts as supreme spiritual lord in the earth. In the latter case he also may set aside the laws of states and set up and put down princes, but by the use of spiritual measures, such as excommunication and the interdict, as also by absolving subjects from their oath of allegiance. Lord Acton in his *Intellectual Freedom* has abundantly shown that in Bellarmine's lifetime popes sanctioned even the death sentence for sovereigns, and Bellarmine himself held that an individual has no right to complain if the pope sanctions the execution of a death sentence through another.

The influence which Bellarmine's treatment of government

by the Inquisition on the ground that a pope is not responsible for the accuracy of the accounts which are made to him—in Innocent's case that actual witches were infesting the German regions. There is no room for doubt that Sixtus meant his bull to have authority for all time.

had upon the origin of American institutions being taken for granted, the bearing of the cardinal's elevation to the doctorate as giving new force to that influence was made clear in an article appearing in *America* on November 7th, 1931, written by a member of the Society of Jesus. "Of peculiar interest to the Catholics of the United States", so wrote the author, "should be the recent honor conferred upon Bellarmine, because a whole school of modern scholarship finds in the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution a very intimate relation with Bellarmine's writings and a certain dependence upon them". In view of this theory of Bellarmine's influence on the origin of the American republic, first broached in 1917, some writers have gone so far as to ascribe some of the very words of the Declaration to Bellarmine's chapters on government. In an article entitled *The Bellarmine-Jefferson Legend*, which appeared in the *Papers of the American Society of Church History* (1928), its far reaching claims were shown to have no historic basis. The effect of the acceptance of Cardinal Bellarmine as the author of a contribution on government which had, as alleged, a direct influence upon the founders of our republic, would be to lessen the great part which Protestant writers from Calvin, Ponet and Mornay to Sidney and Locke had in developing our ideas of free institutions, as also to ignore such documents as the Bills of Rights issued in Holland and England—Protestant countries—and the movements within the American Colonies from the time of the Mayflower Compact. If the theory had historical basis, our national histories from Bancroft to James Truslow Adams would have to be revised as to the origin of our institutions, and the testimonies of the founders of the republic themselves set aside. In proof that the theory has received wide acceptance, two brief quotations may be given. Cardinal Hayes, in addressing a convention of Catholic laymen in Detroit, said: "It is with pride as Catholics we can recall that the principles, almost the very language of our Declaration, were written by the Venerable Bellarmine". And Mr. Chesterton in his *Twelve Modern Apostles* states that "nearly two hundred years before the Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution, in an age devoted to the pride and praise of princes, Cardinal Bellarmine and Suarez, the Spaniard, laid down broadly the whole theory of democracy".⁷

⁷ There was a copy of Bellarmine's *Disputations* in Increase Mather's library, but, so far as I know, in no other early Colonial library. The libraries of the Virginians Col. Byrd and Robert Carter each contained one copy of Bellarmine's minor writings.

Cardinal Bellarmine's *Disputations* must be recognized as one of the imposing theological works of the last four centuries, distinguished by industry and the clearness of the author's treatment. His controversial force called forth the efforts of many Protestant theologians to answer his statements. His *Autobiography* is a document of engaging interest. However, neither the one book nor the other give indications that the author belongs to the company of the "celestial saints" to whom altars of prayer may be reared. As for being a Doctor of the Church, a section of the Roman communion refused to pronounce him for three hundred years as deserving of the title. He is not a Doctor of the Church Universal. At best, he is a most honored champion of the Roman Catholic system and theology.