

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE BIBLE.

[The Rev. Kenelm Vaughan having been savagely attacked by a number of correspondents in the 'Manchester Examiner' on the subject of the Catholic Church and the Bible, ably and temperately defends himself in the same paper. His reply contains in a small compass a refutation of the often exploded ideas instilled into many non-Catholics that the Catholic Church forbids to her people the Holy Scriptures, and is well deserving of careful reading. It is as follows:—

"BEFORE I attempt to reply to the four letters directed against me in your papers of the 5th and 6th inst., allow me to lay down certain general principles upon which the Catholic Church has always acted in her legislation as to the Holy Scriptures.

1. The Church does not permit the sacred Scriptures, divinely committed to her care by the Apostles, to be mistranslated, misused by the ignorant, or perverted by false teachers.
2. In her desire to maintain the integrity of Scripture, and purity of its entire text, the Church condemns and destroys erroneous, heretical, or falsified copies of the same.
3. At certain times, when, for example, the Jews rose in Spain, the Lollards in England, the Waldenses in Savoy, and the Albigenses in France, the Church has been compelled to legislate, not against the right use of Scripture, but in order to preserve its purity and integrity from perversion.

These are the three chief principles which govern the action of the Church in her legislation on the use of Scripture.

I will now take up, one by one, and expose Mr Urwick's so-called 'list of facts.' I will show that some are simply fictitious, and the rest, so far from disproving what I maintained in my last letter—viz., 'that the Catholic Church has never forbidden the use of the Holy Scriptures to her subjects,' substantiate what I affirmed.

'Fact 1.' *Untrue.* Pope Gregory VII. did not condemn 'the general freedom allowed to read the Bible in the vulgar tongue,' nor did he make the slightest reference to this subject. In the letter to Wratisslaus he speaks only of the hiddenness of the meaning of some passages of Holy Scripture, and of the wisdom of God in so ordaining.

'Fact 2.' The letter of Innocent III. contains no prohibition against reading the Scriptures; on the contrary, he admonishes the faithful to read them, but in the words of the Apostle, 'ad sobrietatem.'

'Fact 3.' *Inexact.* The Council of Toulouse (A.D. 1229) allowed the people to read portions of the Bible in the vernacular, such as the Gospels and the Epistles, the Book of Psalms, &c., &c., but restricted the use of the whole Bible. This decree was made for the Province of Toulouse only, and to defeat the efforts of the Waldenses, who used the Scriptures for propagating error. When, by the preaching of St. Dominic, the Manichean heresy ceased, then ceased likewise the enforcement of these laws. The history of those times of religious anarchy explains the stern necessity for such a strict legislation.

'Fact 4.' The Council of Terracona forbade the circulation of the Bible in *Romanico* only, and for this reason; because in those days the converted Jews taught their children the Mosaic laws and ceremonies out of the Bible, for the express purpose of leading them back into Judaism.

'Fact 5.' *Untrue.* The Synod of Oxford (A.D. 1408) merely ordained that no one should, of his own authority, translate into the English or other tongue any text of the Holy Scriptures. It did not forbid English translations published with authority; for there already existed several in use, such as those of Venerable Bede, St. Aidan, &c., &c. The Synod was legislating only against false and unworthy translations, such as that of Wycliffe.

'Fact 6.' The words of Cardinal Ximenes, quoted by Mr Urwick, I cannot find. If they exist, they do not prove that the Catholic Church prohibits the Scriptures. They are simply an opinion of one of her prelates. Here, I may add, that this cardinal published the first Polyglot edition of the Holy Scriptures—the Complutensian, printed at Alcala in 1522.

'Fact 7.' *Untrue.* Catholic Bibles were never burnt in the reign of Queen Mary, or in any other reign. If any were thrown into the flames, they were editions unauthorized and perverted. By this very fact, which I am not lauding, Catholics showed how they condemned wilful alterations of the Sacred Scriptures; like unto the Jews, who burnt every copy of the Scriptures that either was deficient in a single letter, or contained one letter too much.

'Fact 8.' *Irrelevant.* The necessity of a license for reading the Holy Scriptures was not a prohibition to read them; it was but a check or caution against the popular abuse of the Bible, so rife in those days, when men entered into the Tabernacle of Holy Scriptures, not to study and adore the mind of God, but to fabricate from the words of eternal truth weapons wherewith to war against the Author of Truth and the Home of Truth—the Church of God.

'Fact 9.' Here Mr Urwick quotes no authority. If the words were uttered, they do not prove that the Church forbids the reading of Scripture. They only show that Cardinal Hosius judged it expedient that those who were under his jurisdiction should receive the Word of God from sermons and spiritual books of instruction rather than be led to seek it themselves in those versions of the Holy Scriptures which, having become contaminated by evil hands, were no longer the pure source of Divine Wisdom. He also expressed himself to be of the same mind as St. Chrysostom, who said that to cast the Sacred Scriptures to the carnal and malicious was like throwing holy things to dogs and pearls to swine.

'Fact 10.' The Jerusalem Synod did not forbid the reading of the Bible, but permitted its use with discrimination.

'Fact 11.' The famous bull of Clement XI. does not forbid the circulation of the Holy Scriptures, but merely condemns their indiscriminate use by persons unqualified for such reading—that is, the *unlearned and unstable*, of whom St. Peter speaks. Even Fuller, Hey, and many other Protestant divines, have honestly acknowledged the danger of such indiscriminate reading.

'Fact 12.' Quænel had merely published a translation, not of the Bible, but of the New Testament, appending to it his own notes. Now, the Church condemned his interpretations as erroneous, and not the use of any faithful translation of Scripture, as Mr. Urwick would lead us to understand. Indeed, there were then many French editions in common use, such as those by De Viquay, Corbin, Amelotte, De Sacy, and Bishop Godeau.

'Fact 13.' Even if it be true that Pope Benedict XIV. withheld his sanction for a new translation of the Bible into Persian, it was only because the translator was unqualified for the work, and because there existed already two Persian translations, one by a Catholic of Jaffa, and the other by Jerome Xavier, also a Catholic. Here I may add that the great majority of foreign versions of Scripture have been done by Catholics, mostly Missionaries, and that the Protestant Bible Societies have availed themselves largely of their labors.

'Facts 14, 17, 18.' *Irrelevant.* In the encyclicals referred to here by Mr. Urwick it is the Protestant Bible Societies that are condemned, and not the reading of the Scriptures. And why does the Church condemn these societies? Not because she is ill-disposed against the personal members, or against the circulation of the Holy Scriptures, as if, as Protestants say, subversive of the Catholic faith, but because the editions which they publish are either defective or erroneous. Such Bibles are the Gospel of man rather than the Gospel of God.

1. They are defective. They suppress on principle, without any justifiable motive, eight entire books, besides three chapters in the book of Esther, and three in the book of Daniel, all of which belong to the Word of God. Many Protestant Bishops and divines refused to join the Protestant Bible Societies, for the very reason that they suppressed even books out of which lessons are appointed to be read in the Anglican service.

2. That their versions are unfaithful is abundantly shown in 'Ward's Errata of the Protestant Bible.'

3. The principles of these societies, to use the words of a late Protestant Bishop, tend to shake the foundations on which belief in the inspiration of Holy Scripture rests.

'Fact 15.' *False.* In that very year, when Mr. Urwick pretends that the Holy Scriptures were forbidden in Ireland, there were published in Ireland cheap editions of the New Testament, with the approbation of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, for general distribution in the schools, hospitals, and prisons. In the following years, when the clergy of Ireland, Mr. Urwick pretends, 'were doing their utmost to put a stop to the circulation of the Scriptures,' there were from the year 1820 to 1854, as many as *forty-six* various editions of the Bible, or parts of the Bible, brought out in Ireland alone, mostly by Catholic Bishops.

'Fact 16.' *False.* Pope Pius VII. never prohibited the circulation of the Scriptures: but in the bull referred to by Mr. Urwick he expressly commends the Archbishop of Mohilew for exhorting his people to the reading of Holy Scripture, so long as the regulations of the Church were adhered to. And he refers the Archbishop to the letter of Pius VI., where he says that 'the Scriptures ought to be left open to all to draw from them purity of faith and of morals.'

Thus much for Mr. Urwick's list of facts. So far from proving that the Church takes the Scriptures from her people, they show that she is the faithful guardian of Holy Scripture, and only fulfils her sacred duty in preventing her people from being led into error by false and corrupt rendering of the sacred text. That Protestants should systematically misinterpret the actions of the Church in this matter is indeed incomprehensible.

The Church debars from Holy Communion persons 'not discerning the body of the Lord,' lest they may 'eat and drink damnation' to themselves. Would it be right to say that she thereby prohibits to her people the bread of eternal life? But thus Protestants argue. For because the Church has, from time to time, been compelled to make certain disciplinary laws with regard to the use of Scripture, they raise throughout the country a cry that the Church takes away the Bible from her people—that her motto is, as Mr. Urwick would have us believe, 'Hide the Scriptures'—'Burn them.' Is not this most unjust?

I have sufficiently defended my proposition, which in looking over Bishop Milner's work, I find is also his. He says that 'the Church has never interdicted the use of the Bible to the laity, as Protestants say.' I will therefore now leave it to the public to decide who is an instance of 'gross ignorance or reckless ignoring the truth,' who it is who is throwing dust in the eyes of the Manchester people—Mr. Urwick or myself?

This letter is already too long. But another time I should like to prove the truth of the assertion ironically stated in your paper by 'W. E. R.,' that 'the Church of Rome has always been the best agent in the world for disseminating the Word of God.'

Another of these painful scenes, a forcible eviction, has been carried out on the estate of Mr. Nicholson, of Kells, in the county of Meath. The evicting party were accompanied by no less than 100 men of the Irish Constabulary, under a sub-inspector and a company of infantry, the whole force of which was under the command of a resident magistrate. There appears to have been little need for this formidable display, as we are informed the tenant gave up possession in a peaceable manner.

Crime in Ireland.—Dr. Hancock, in his tenth annual report on the judicial statistics of Ireland, states that between 1864 and 1872 there was a diminution in the yearly aggregate of indictable offences from 10,866 to 7716 cases. Against this, however, he has to place an increase in the number of riots and of crimes against human life.

The very erudite author of the "Scotichronicon," the celebrated Rev. Dr. J. F. S. Gordon, has written to Father John O'Hanlon, expressing his gratification with the first number of the "Lives of the Irish Saints." The testimony of Dr. Gordon will do much, we hope, to extend the circulation of the great work, which is undoubtedly destined to transmit the name and reputation of its author to all posterity.