

It would be difficult to tell whether the Bible or the Press have been worse abused by some Protestants. Both have been made by them subservient to the worst of ends—to the propagation of falsehood, religious error and ill-will among men. Every fanatic, heretic, infidel, and traitor appeals to the Bible to justify himself, and uses the Press to accomplish his ends. The Bible and the Press in the hands of Protestants are like steam-engines and Armstrong guns in the hands of those who know little or nothing about the way to manage such things, or of men who with knowledge enough want principle to retrieve them from abusing them to improper purposes. Not that Protestants always and invariably abuse the Press and the Bible, but there are no proper means to prevent them doing so. Public opinion and the civil law are but poor restraints. The former, instead of being a restraint, is too often an incentive to the abuse both of the Bible and the Press. Conscience and the authority of the Church are the only effectual means to prevent the abuse of the Bible and the Press. But the *Argus* and his friends in the Protestant Press repudiate the authority of God's Church, and a conscience such as theirs is a difficult thing to define or understand.

The Press was the gift of God to man, evidently intended by the Giver to uphold the interests of truth and justice, and therefore to strengthen the Church. It is a pity, therefore, when it falls into the hands of such men as the Editors of the *Star* and *Argus*, who obviously use it to defame the ministers of God's Church by publishing false tittle-tattles to the end that they and the Church may be exposed to public ridicule and odium, and so be rejected of the people. This is to prostitute the Press. But the good priest must be consoled with the word of Him who said, Blessed are ye when men speak evil against you falsely for My sake.

Some years hence, possibly when the present generation are all dead and buried, the *Argus's* story of Bates and the Bouquet will be revived as if they never had been refuted or explained. The thing that surprises and shocks me is the brazen impudence with which false stories against the Church, and which have been refuted hundreds of times, are trumped up and again circulated in the Press and otherwise by Protestant clergy, and others from some of whom one might expect better things.

Here is a case in point. Everybody knows the Church is accused of "suppressing" that part of the Decalogue which forbids idolatry. The subject was revived some short time ago in Auckland.

I took the liberty of sending to one of the leading Protestants, a dignitary of the Colonial Anglican Church, Dr. Maunsel, a copy of a catechism used by the Catholic children here, or some of them, in which the whole Mosaic prohibition against idolatry is given, as in the catechism of the Church of England. I also referred him to the English version of the Douay Bible, where the prohibition stands as in the Protestant scriptures. Oh! says he, that won't do. This is only one catechism, and one swallow does not make a summer, and, moreover, he said he never spoke of the Douay Bible.

Now, there is a specimen of candour and honesty! How this gentleman can reconcile a desire to suppress or conceal the prohibition with the fact of its appearing entire in any Catholic catechism whatever, and in the Douay English Bible, open to all, is more than I can understand. Yet I will be bound to say, that when next he has occasion to refer to the matter, either in the pulpit or press, he will roundly and boldly affirm that the Romish Church suppresses the prohibition against idolatry,—utterly and grossly incorrect though the assertion be,—and which he ought to know is untrue, but won't.

It is thus the Protestant Press and Pulpit are prostituted to the base purpose of defaming the Catholic Church, and misleading the people in a matter of eternal moment. If in some Catholic catechism the Mosaic prohibition against the worship of "false gods" be abridged, every well instructed Catholic knows it is not for the purpose of suppressing anything; since the prohibition against the worship of false gods includes a prohibition against idolatry, as every Catholic catechism I have seen fully explains, I venture to say so much, though this be hardly a subject for lay-handling.

I remember some time ago a Protestant correspondent asking you if it were true that the Catholic Church had really struck out the Second Commandment. You gave him a rather curt and severe answer, as much as to say—No; confound your ignorance and impudence for asking such a question! But the question I doubt not was put in good faith, and with no intention to affront. Thousands on thousands of Protestants like this correspondent are honestly impressed with the same idea. It comes from the parsons, and passes from mouth to mouth without examination. I wish you had asked your correspondent, and I will now do it for you with your leave, Who told him, or where did he learn, that the Catholic Church had struck out the Second Commandment of the Decalogue? The matter does require a little public examination and explanation no doubt, for the sake of honest inquiring Protestants, of whom your correspondent might have been one.

There was a little work, published by a "Convert" some years ago, on Popular Delusions respecting the Catholic religion. Would it not be well to give some passages from that occasionally, for the benefit of inquiring Protestants in this age of free enquiry, or from "The Papist Represented and Misrepresented," or from Cobbet's outspoken history of the "Reformation."

LAIC.

An interesting centenary festival is to be celebrated in England during the next few months—the four hundredth anniversary of the introduction of printing into the country. The first book printed in England in the English tongue is dated 1477. Two works in English had previously been printed at Bruges. Flanders was one of the earliest seats of manufactures, commerce, and that sort of civilization in the West; long before, and long after, that date, it was far wealthier and more enlightened than England.

THE ETERNITY OF HELL.

(Concluded.)

I WILL not finish this letter without answering that other objection insinuated by you, and with which you apparently feel very satisfied, because, as you say, "though no more than a conjecture, it cannot be denied it is a very plausible and philosophical one, and perhaps not totally destitute of foundation." You then explain the system which has pleased you so much, and consists in considering the dogma of hell as a formula in which is expressed the idea of intolerance which presides in the doctrines and conduct of the Catholic Church. Allow me to transcribe your own words, as we shall thus avoid the danger of misunderstanding:—"The intellect and heart of man were to be subjected by binding them with a ring of iron: the means of accomplishing it were wanting in human things, and it was found necessary to make the justice of God intervene. Might it not be suspected that the ministers of the Catholic religion, more deceived, perhaps, than deceiving, have appealed to the common resource of poets, of clearing up a complicated situation by calling in the aid of some god, or, speaking in literary terms—by employing the machine? I am greatly deceived if I cannot discover, in the pretended justice of an inexorable God, the Catholic priest with his inflexible obstinacy." You are rather severe, my esteemed friend, in the passage I am after transcribing, and no matter what surprise my words may cause you. I make bold to tell you that, far from finding you philosophical as usual, you are very inexact and very rash—inexact, because you suppose the dogma of the eternity of punishment belongs exclusively to Catholics, whereas Protestants also profess it; and rash, because you try to convert into an expression of the ruling thought of Christianity a fact generally believed by the human race.

The prurience, so common in our day, even among first-class writers, of giving a philosophical reason founded on a new and sharp observation, has carried you away, and caused you to lose sight for an instant of what no historian is ignorant of. You wished to signify that this was an invention of the Christian priests, though respecting their good intention and candour by supposing them victims of an illusion; but how could you have forgotten that centuries before the appearance of Christianity the belief in the existence of hell was widely extended and deeply rooted?

You are mildly satirical on "the good monks who delight in frightening children and women with the dreadful description of torments forged in wild and rude imaginations, and which a man of sound sense and good taste can with difficulty hear without laughing or becoming disgusted." I can see you want to make the poor preachers pay dearly for the annoyance your good mother used to give you by bringing you to sermons, when you would be more agreeably employed at your play and diversions; but, be it said without any intention to give offence, and solely in defence of the truth, you here make a sad stumble, in which your only consolation is your having, among those who lightly mock the dogmas and practices of our religion, many companions in misfortune.

You laugh at the *exaggerations of the monks*, which appear to you insupportable from their want of reason and their bad taste. Well, then, I challenge you to produce from among those you have heard from the mouth of a preacher, the description that may appear to you most extravagant, and I hereby oblige myself to quote for you another on this very subject which will not be behind it in frightfulness, extravagance, and horror. And do you know whose those descriptions shall be? Virgil's, Dante's, Tasso's and Milton's. You never thought that behind the good Capuchin whom you attacked so furiously, you would stumble on so respectable a reserve in matters of reason and good taste. Sometimes precipitation of judgment is more injurious to us than ignorance itself. It often happens that we despise an expression in hatred or contempt of the person who uses it—an expression which would appear to us admirable if we heard it from the mouth of another who commanded our respect. Hence Montaigne pleasantly said that he amused himself by scattering through his writings sentences from grave philosophers, without naming them, that his critics, believing they had to do with Montaigne alone, might insult Seneca and pull Plutarch's nose.

It is not easy to exactly describe the variety of the horrors of hell, but it is certain that Christians and Gentiles have agreed in painting them in frightful colours, Virgil was neither monk, nor preacher, nor Christian, nor was he wanting in *good taste*, and yet it would be hard to bring together more horrors than he places before us, not only in hell, but even on the road:—

"Just in the gate and in the jaws of hell
Revengeful cares and sullen sorrows dwell;
And pale diseases, and repining age;
Want, fear, and famine's unrestricted rage;
Here toils, and death, and death's half-brother, sleep,
Forms terrible to view, their sentry keep;
With anxious pleasures of a gully mind,
Deep frauds before, and open force behind."

Before arriving at the fatal mansion we meet with *the tresses of vipers*, with *hydras that roar with a terrible noise*, with *monsters armed with fire*, together with *forbidden joys*, *mala mentis gaudia*, weeping and revengeful remorse, *luctus et ultrices curie*. But let us follow him still, and the horror increases until it becomes extreme:—

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Triple walls talked with a river of fire, groans, noise of lashes,
clanking of chains, serpents, and the hydra with a hundred
mouths, a vulture pecking the liver and other things similar:
behold what the poet represents in the mansion, as he
himself says, of *defrauders*, *adulterers*, *those who are cruel towards
their parents*, *the incestuous*, *traitors to their country*, and those
guilty of other crimes. I doubt very much whether you have