

"CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY AND MODERN UNBELIEF."

[COMMUNICATED.]

THIS is a book which must have been the result of much labour, study, and thought. The author has aimed to present Catholicism, in its totality of doctrine and practice, before the reader, so that he may apprehend it without misapprehension and misrepresentation. From the central dogma of the Incarnation, all the mysteries and doctrines, devotions and practices, the life and spirit of Catholicity, emanate like rays of light. The introduction is a master piece of reasoning against infidelity and freethought, which aim to free the conscience from religious restraints. Hence they caricature religion. He is severe upon agnosticism, positivism, atheism, and all other isms. Modern infidelity, unlike that of the 18th century, is essentially ignorant and irreverent. Its professors are neither wits nor scholars. It is, however, more dangerous to a flippant society than was the Voltairian atheism. This is an age of indifference, of life and education without God. It is labouring to annihilate Christianity, and especially its greatest bulwark—an infallible Church. The freethinkers sneer at legitimate authority, and pursue a policy of unprincipled rebellion against its divine authority. Scepticism is the result of private judgment, and individualism leads to rationalism and infidelity. Pessimism follows in due course and life becomes actually valueless; society becomes a herd of cattle and horses, with the survival of the fittest. Protestantism is melting away, like an iceberg before the fire of Rationalism. Infidels and Protestants give a caricature of Catholicism. They forget that the Church's primary doctrine is her own infallibility; she is inspired by the Holy Spirit that inspired the Bible, and her living voice is equally with the Bible—the word of God. Indeed, she vouches for the Bible, and has sanctioned the canon of Holy Writ. She existed before the Bible, and it is her vocation to interpret it aright. She is a living infallible oracle, and not a dead book, interpreted in multifarious and contradictory ways, as Protestant Churches do. Catholicism is enveloped in an atmosphere of mystery—as, indeed, is man himself, with his dual existence, which materialism ignores. Catholicism, like truth, is necessarily intolerant of error; she believes that she is guided in her interpretation of the Bible by the Holy Spirit abiding with her, and consequently she cannot err. Her divine mission is to teach with authority, and it is our bounden duty to sit at her feet, like Mary at the feet of Christ, and learn wisdom. An infallible revelation requires an infallible interpreter. Protestantism in the last analysis resolves itself into infidelity. The chapter on godless education receives a fresh confirmation in our secular system in this Colony. Reverence is entirely wanting in these Colonial schools. The author, by travel and extensive reading, is well posted up in the habits of thought prevalent in these Colonies. He justly scathes with his satire the religions of humanity. They all are materialistic, and ignore the dual nature of man. They are "the bag of bones theory." There is no such thing as spirit or soul or mind distinct from the body, any more than there is a conscious, personal God apart from the universe. Had he the Otago University in his eye, when he wrote that the grand discovery of modern times is osmosis!—which means that man is only an aggregate of cells; the will, and all that, is but the succession of cellular vibrations; and the action of the mind is of the combination of brain waves, as they pass over the delicate nerves and brain tissue. His chapter on modern spiritism is not satisfactory to me; for he admits that behind the so-called phenomena, there are veritable demons. The book is a splendid apology for the Church and the Bible; for freethought, he justly argues, is the natural outcome of education without God. But, alas! how few do really think in this busy and mechanical age. The age is revolutionary, and refuses to listen to the Church. Hence we have travesties of religion. The author has done a real service to Religion in the publication of this excellently written work. He succeeded Dr. Moran, the energetic Bishop of Dunedin, in South Africa. He is Bishop of Retimo, and Vicar Apostolic of the Eastern Vicariate of the Cape Colony. Altogether, the Right Rev. J. D. Richards, D.D. may be regarded as one of the very best defenders of the Faith, in this latter half of the nineteenth century. Considering that he is a missionary prelate, and destitute of the leisure, comfort, and means of information enjoyed by European bishops, it is really wonderful to see how pure, and clear, and scholarly his style, upon the whole, is. One reads his book with positive delight, and lays it aside with regret. The perusal of such a book is refreshing, exhilarating and reinvigorating.

A cable despatch from Paris, of April 1, gives the following which we publish for what it is worth:—The question of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and England, the United States and English-speaking countries generally, is likely to be solved ere long in an unexpected manner by the appointment of Mgr. di Rende, now Papal Nuncio at Paris, to a high post at the Propaganda, with the title of "Cardinal Protector of English Speaking Catholics." It has been long felt that some change has been desirable in the method of conducting business transactions between Rome on the one hand and England and North America on the other. At one time the Vatican hoped to effect this by the appointment of diplomatic agents, but the American and English Episcopate, and Cardinal Maunig notably, so strongly opposed this plan that it was not thought advisable to press it. The rectors of the English and American colleges at Rome have hitherto been the chief agents for an arrangement of business matters with the Holy See; but this was regarded as inadequate. The elevation of Mgr. di Rende to a Cardinal Protectorship such as that once exercised by Cardinal York, "the last of the Stuarts," would, it is thought, be agreeable to the British Government and in-vure the appointment of acceptable English prelates to colonial and Irish bishoprics. Mgr. di Rende's training would fit him for his prospective duties. He was long resident in London, and preached in Marylebone. He is also a priest of the Archdiocese of Westminster.

THE LATEST IMPROVEMENT.

(Dunedin Evening Herald.)

IN a speech delivered six or seven weeks ago in Wales by Lord Salisbury, the present Prime Minister, he complained of the present tendency "to fetter men and withdraw from them the freedom of action and of contract which they have hitherto enjoyed. That secular reproduction of the Inquisition, the modern Inspector, is abroad in all the land. His encroachments are at every man's door. He is the one danger to liberty that is to be feared." In New Zealand we have now a whole host of inspectors with subs and deputies, ramifying the Civil Service, and maintained at a ridiculous expense, taking into account the limited number of our population. We cannot trace the history of the whole battalion, but we will select one as an example. In 1873 a complete and comprehensive Prisons Act was passed, under which the visitation and inspection of prisons was vested in two or more Visiting Justices nominated by the Governor, of whom the Resident Magistrate usually was one. This plan worked well, and was carried out in a sufficient manner for the requirements of a young country which had no criminal class strictly so-called. The prisoners in the main consisted of thoughtless ne'er-do-wells expatriated by equally thoughtless friends in Britain, who, when their allowances ran short, victimised hotel-keepers by passing valueless cheques. There were a few unfortunates also who had got into trouble when the malt was uppermost. But of professional criminals we had none. It worked well for nine years, till 1882, when the Atkinson Government carried a consolidation of the Prisons Acts, in which a new clause was introduced authorising the appointment of an Inspector of Prisons, at a suitable salary of course, whose duty was "to inspect all prisons." The powers and duties of the Visiting Justices were left untouched. The new official was scarcely warm in his seat until he took steps to enlarge the scope of his authority and duties, and assume executive functions. Accordingly the very next session, in 1883, a new Prisons Bill was passed, containing the following important clause:—"In addition to any other powers given to the Inspector of Prisons by the said Act (1882), he shall, in relation to any prison, have and exercise all the additional powers exercisable by a Visiting Justice under section 3 of this Act." His power of inspection has thus super-added power to hear complaints of prisoners and to make inquiry and take evidence on oath as to the conduct of any prison officer, the treatment and conduct of the prisoner, and alleged abuses. While the Inspector is thus receiving additional wing feathers, care is taken to clip the wings of the Visiting Justices. The sections of the Act of 1882 conferring the necessary judicial powers on Visiting Justices are repealed and swept away. The Inspector is master of the field. He has at all times the ear of the Minister of Justice, and as secrecy is preserved as to the contents of his reports, he becomes indirectly a secret irresponsible functionary, coming within the category of those described in forcible terms by Lord Salisbury. Every prison is a kind of bastle, governed by rules and regulations of an autocratic nature, emanating from the suggestions of an Executive Inspector. We view the union of these functions as inconsistent with the due regard of the sacred principles of liberty which we have been trained to respect. If an inspector be deemed necessary, let his duties be confined to inspection and report. It is the spirit of our law that the maintenance of power and order everywhere be entrusted to those of our fellow-colonists whom the Governor may nominate in that behalf as Justices and Magistrates, and prisons ought to be no exception. If the Justices fail in their duty, that is no reason for encroaching on our sacred edifice of civil liberty by a radical change of system. Those who fail can be removed and others appointed in their stead. We hope some member will take up this subject and prevent the colony from lapsing into a system of bondage under irresponsible inspectors.

The Italian troops on the Red Sea coast are beginning to feel the coast of colonization. The heat increases, and it is now at 112 degrees; flies and insects devour the soldiers mercilessly; there is no other relief than that of covering the face with a wet handkerchief. To the tormenting heat of the day succeed nights of great humidity; rain is frequent, and in the morning heat begins again. At night the camp is visited by hyenas, and it is forbidden to fire upon them lest the noise should alarm the troops. Rations are not very palatable, nor even wholesome. Meat is plentiful, but it is necessary to cook it as soon as it is killed, for the heat spoils it rapidly. There is abundance of water, but it is not drinkable, and the soldiers say that they would give an eye for a piece of ice. A soldier in garrison at Massowah writes: "The Government has the right to ask us, in the name of the country, to sacrifice our lives, and we are ready to do so; but it has no right to condemn us to so long and painful an agony."—Cor. of *Pilot*.

An enormous emigration from Italy to America is expected this season. As a result of last year's cholera epidemic, Italy is suffering from an almost unprecedented commercial depression, and all branches of industry show a lassitude which amounts in some trades almost to stagnation. In the rural districts, the depression has caused an almost total failure of the production of wine and oil, and other crops have suffered a severe check. The strike among the rural labourers at Maouta is growing into larger proportions daily, and the authorities restrain the strikers from acts of violence and bloodshed with difficulty. Thus far 170 strikers have been imprisoned. The tyranny of the Government in making unwarranted arrests, suppressing or pestroying telegrams containing truthful statements of the situation, and seizing all newspapers which are outspoken in their protestations against high-handed official acts, is wildly denounced. The treatment meted out to such journals as have given voice to the existing misery and denounced the acts of the officials is almost unprecedented. The journalists are organising a league for mutual protection against the prosecutions which threaten to overwhelm them.