

loathed Calvin, and cursed John Knox—that would be a parallel to the Royal Declaration. Whether Rome is herself a persecutor is to a Liberal utterly irrelevant. The theory of persecuting the persecutor would end logically in eating the King of the Cannibal Islands. That Rome is a gory tyrant and a ruthless intriguer, that she threatens liberty and patriotism, all these are quite honest arguments—for being a Tory. To a Liberal they are utterly impertinent. Islam has massacred millions of Christians; Jews are charged with international intrigue; Agnosticism is to many a mere nightmare. But if you say that a Jew or a Moslem or an Agnostic must not be a barrister—then you are not a Liberal. I think Calvinism has been a greater curse than leprosy. But if I say that no Calvinist shall be a Lord of the Admiralty—then I am not a Liberal. The total abolition of the Declaration would not be a concession to Romanism. It would simply be a triumph to Radicalism, the completion of the consistent emancipation of the whole nineteenth century. The Roman Catholics, as such, are quite rightly content with some compromise; they only want to live among heretics secure from special insult. They are not bound by their creed to do more than soften the Declaration. But Liberals are bound by their creed to sweep it utterly away.

They have not swept it utterly away, but they have at least swept away the 'incubus of bigotry' which made it so obnoxious to Catholics. The new form of Declaration runs as follows:—'I solemnly and sincerely, in the presence of God, profess, testify, and declare that I am a faithful member of the Protestant Reformed Church, and will, according to the true intent of the enactments securing the Protestant succession, uphold and maintain the said enactments to the best of my power and according to law.' 'Catholics and Protestants alike,' said Father Bridgett, writing some years ago on the subject of the oath, 'will bless the man who shall relieve the nation from a burden which is both a folly and a crime.' Thanks are assuredly due to Mr. Asquith for the tact and courage he has displayed, but the men who are entitled to the chief credit for relieving the nation of this burden are Mr. John Redmond and his party, who, by the service they have rendered in this matter, have placed the Catholics of the Empire under an everlasting debt of gratitude to them. Grateful recognition must also certainly be made of the splendid spirit of reasonableness and fairmindedness displayed everywhere by the daily press, their solid and whole-hearted support of the reform making the Government's task a comparatively easy one. The result is gratifying in a twofold way—gratifying in itself as effecting the removal of an old and galling grievance; and gratifying, in the second place, as furnishing indirect but striking evidence of the growth of the Church's influence and prestige.

An 'Appeal to History'

An Anglican Archdeacon has been recently disporting himself in the columns of a Marlborough paper in an endeavor to revive the ancient and musty legend that the Catholic Church is opposed to the circulation and multiplication of copies of the Bible. The subject has been so often and so fully threshed out in these columns that any lengthy discussion of the question would be wearisome to the generality of our readers. We reply, therefore, to the Archdeacon's latest utterance—a letter in the Marlborough *Express*—in the briefest possible way. The notion that the Catholic Church forbids the reading of the Bible is, in the words of the *Quarterly Review* (October, 1879), 'not simply a mistake—it is one of the most ludicrous and grotesque blunders.' When Protestants bring forward various ecclesiastical enactments prohibiting the general use of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, it will be found, on examination, that these regulations relate, not to the Scriptures in themselves, but to translations which the Church, for one reason or another, considers defective and liable to lead to error rather than to a fuller knowledge of the truth. Such—as we shall show—is the case in all the instances of prohibition cited by Archdeacon Grace. His letter, like all Gaul, may be divided into three parts. In the first may be grouped the paragraphs which he has lettered (a), (b), (c), and (e). The first two of these refer to the Councils of Toulouse and Tarragona, which forbade the reading of the vernacular translations made by the Albigenses. The Albigenses taught that the visible world was created by an evil God, who was also the author of the Old Testament—which they consequently rejected—and they quoted Rom. v., 20, to prove this. They also asserted that the body of Christ was not real, and that sins committed after Baptism could not be forgiven. To support these errors they made a new translation of the Bible, and explained it in their own sense (Hallam, *Middle Ages*, ch. ix.). It was this corrupt translation which the Councils referred to forbade to be read. If Archdeacon Grace did not know these things

he ought not to write on such a subject without making himself fully acquainted with the facts; if he did know the facts, his action in suppressing and misrepresenting them is unpardonable. Paragraphs (c) and (e) of the Archdeacon's letter refer to the condemnation of Coverdale and Grafton's Bible and Tyndale's New Testament. These translations were so notoriously corrupt as to cause a general outcry against them, even among learned Protestants, as well as amongst Catholics. 'It is affirmed,' says Disraeli, speaking of these translations, 'that one Bible swarmed with 6000 faults. Indeed, from another source we discover that Sterne, a solid scholar, was the first who summed up the 3600 faults that were in our printed Bibles of London' (*Curiosities of Literature*, p. 430). Of Tyndale's New Testament, the Rev. J. H. Blunt—a recognised Anglican authority—says: 'In some editions of Tyndale's New Testament there is what must be regarded as a wilful omission of the gravest possible character, for it appears in several editions, and has no shadow of justification in the Greek or Latin of the passage. . . . Such an error was quite enough justification for the suppression of Tyndale's translation' (*History of the Reformation of the Church of England*, vol. I., p. 514, note). Thus out of the mouth of the Archdeacon's own authorities is the suppression of this translation justified.

The paragraphs lettered (f), (g), and (h) refer to Papal condemnations of Protestant Bible Societies, or of opposition to their particular versions of the Scriptures. It is perfectly true that several of the Popes have warned Catholics against the Protestant Bible Societies, which distribute versions of the Bible—versions which, in the judgment of the Church, are either defective or corrupt—with the avowed purpose of perverting simple Catholics. We have high Anglican authority for the assertion that it is opposition to the Catholic Church that gives these heterogeneous bodies an element of unity. 'We firmly believe,' says the Rev. E. L. Blenkinsopp, 'that the idea that the dissemination of the Bible in various languages is the great power to meet the claims of the Catholic Church, and to overcome them, goes a long way in preserving amity among the members of that society, and in preventing them from disagreeing among themselves' (*Studies in Modern Problems—Catholic and Protestant*, p. 5). In view of these facts, and of the unhallowed uses to which the sacred volume has been so often turned through indiscriminate circulation among the heathen, it is only surprising that any rational being could have thought it possible for the Holy See to assume any other attitude towards such proceedings. The only remaining paragraph of the Archdeacon's communication, that lettered (d), refers to the action of the Council of Trent in requiring the laity to apply to their confessor or parish priest before using or possessing themselves of copies of the Bible. Here there is admittedly no question of condemnation or prohibition, but a mere temporary regulation, adopted as a precautionary measure at a time when the new principle of unfettered private judgment had just been launched upon the world and was being carried to the wildest extremes. The regulation has long since been withdrawn; and to-day the Holy Scriptures are sold without restraint by every Catholic bookseller, and the penny editions of the Gospels, brought out by the Catholic Truth Society, are selling by the hundred thousand. Thus, out of the eight instances cited by Archdeacon Grace—in his somewhat ostentatious 'appeal to history'—to prove that the Catholic Church 'has done its utmost to prevent the free circulation of the Scriptures,' only one refers to what the Church regards as the authentic Scriptures, and in that case there was neither condemnation nor prohibition; while the remaining seven, without exception, refer not to the Bible as Bible, but to what the Church regards as imperfect and misleading translations. Had the Archdeacon shown himself a man of candor, and frankly mentioned that the prohibitions he cited referred only to special translations, no one would have been misled, and readers of the *Express* would have seen at a glance how utterly pointless his whole letter was. The truth is that up till the thirteenth century—when certain heresies arose and corrupt versions of the Scriptures were brought out—not a single prohibition had ever been issued against the popular reading of the Bible; and when since that time the Church has condemned particular versions she has done so, not because they were translations of the Bible into a spoken language, but because they were not translations of God's Word.

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