

BURNING THE BIBLE.

The agents and other employers of the Protestant Reformation Society, American Bible Society, &c., are endeavoring to make some capital out of the occurrence at Corbeau, in this State, where it is alleged, a quantity of Protestant Bibles were publicly burnt, by the Catholic Clergy. By exciting the religious sympathies and angry passions of the poor dupes and fanatics by whom those societies are mainly supported, they calculate on receiving more liberal donations to aid them in their well-paid labours. *Hinc illa lacryma*—hence their crocodile tears and lamentations over the ashes to which their precious Bibles were reduced by the sacrilegious hands of the emissaries of the Man of Sin!

We wish them success in their disinterested labour of love, and hope their next annual report will exhibit, in the increase of their receipts, conclusive evidence that they know how to take advantage of every event, and evince consummate address in the art of "raising the wind." In the mean time, however, we must beg leave to set the matter in its proper light before our readers. To burn a single copy of the sacred scriptures out of hatred or contempt for the word of God contained in them, would be an act of sacrilege which every Christian must reprobate. But to burn or otherwise destroy a spurious or corrupt copy of the Bible, whose circulation would tend to disseminate erroneous principles of faith or morals, we hold to be an act not only justifiable but praiseworthy, when done without prejudice to the civil and religious rights of others. The American Bible Society acted on this principle when, on a late occasion, they condemned the Spanish Catholic version which they had printed, and, by a solemn resolution of the Board of Directors, ordered it to be cast into the furnace. This resolution they published to the world in their last Annual Report, and it has been carried into effect, without a syllable of censure or complaint on our part. We held no meeting to protest against "the wicked edict," or denounce the act as a "deed of wickedness." Though we noted the circumstance when it occurred, we never thought of viewing it as an act of "sacrilege," or that it would be of use in showing that [Protestantism] is unchangeable; that its malignant hatred of the truth is as deep as ever; and that in every country and every community it will resort to the fagot and the flame when such weapons promise the removal of adversaries, or may be employed without personal danger to those who use them." Yet such is the language employed by the *N. Y. Observer* in reference to the burning of the Protestant Bible by the Canadian priest at the village of Corbeau; though a candid and impartial review of the circumstances of the proceedings on both sides, would show that the Catholic priest did no more than what had been done by the American Bible Society.

The Bible Society on their own authority condemned the Catholic version of the Sacred Scriptures, and prohibited its circulation. The Catholic priest condemned the Protestant version on the authority of the Universal Church, and prohibited its circulation among his own flock. The Bible Society ordered its agents to cast the plates of the Catholic version into the fire, because they considered it unlawful to make use of a version which countenanced the belief that the Apocrypha formed a part of the Sacred Scriptures, and that the Catholic version was correct.

The Catholic priest ordered his flock to throw their Protestant versions into the fire, because he believed it unlawful to use a translation which differed in many points from the version authorized by the church, and which by excluding the Apocrypha from the Sacred canon, might lead them to suppose that those books are not of divine authority, though approved of by the church and included in the canon of the Sacred Scriptures.

The only difference we can discover in the

proceedings on both sides is that the Protestants destroyed the Catholic version in their storehouse; whereas the Catholics are reported to have destroyed the Protestant version in a yard.—Had they taken the Protestant Bible into the street, their conduct would have been highly reprehensible, inasmuch as it would be calculated to wound the religious prejudices and exasperate the feelings of their fellow-Christians of other denominations; but as it was done—if done at all,—privately in the yard of a private house, and as the act was prompted not by a spirit of hatred and contempt of the truth of God's word, but rather by love and zeal for the purity and integrity of the Sacred Scriptures which the malice and wickedness of sacrilegious innovators had corrupted and mutilated, we see nothing in the whole proceeding but what may be justified on the plea alleged by the Bible Society for suppressing the Catholic Spanish version of the Bible, and condemning it to the flames.

Let it be borne in mind that it is not the Catholic church alone which condemns the common Protestant version copied from King James's Bible. It is pronounced essentially correct and erroneous in many important passages not only by Unitarians and Universalists, but also by many *vo i d sant* Orthodox divines. Besides Webster's expurgated version, another edition of the Bible has been recently published in Philadelphia, which professes to correct many of the most important errors of the common version. This new Bible has been made the subject of several articles in the *N. Y. Observer*, from the last of which, in the paper now lying before us, we take the following extract, which fully sustains our assertion, that we are not the only persons conscientiously opposed to the Protestant version:

"In concluding our review of this whole subject, we have a remark or two to make. In this attempt to mend the Bible, a great injury has been done by those men. It has no doubt unsettled the confidence of many in the correctness of the common version. The practice of attacking this version in preaching, as some ministers are wont to do—of always mending their text before the people, is bad enough. But this attempt however, is far worse. Here is an attempt to unsettle the whole foundation—to pull down the whole superstructure,—or so to change its form and features, that it becomes thereby a new Bible. The man who believes one half of what he finds in this new version, will conclude that the common English Bible is surcharged with mistakes and blunders.

We have, throughout our remarks, exonerated our Baptist brethren from all participation as a denomination, in the preparation and publication of this Bible. And yet we think it may be fairly asked, whether it would ever have been undertaken, had not the impulse been given by that denomination. We speak in the utmost kindness towards them, when we ask, would this new Bible have appeared, had not the American and Foreign Bible Society spoken, as it has in its Reports, of the common version, as "presenting the truth in a dim eclipse"—of "its shedding disastrous, if not sickly twilight upon men"—and as "having done evils, which no tongue can tell." We have no doubt that those, who spoke thus, spoke the honest convictions of their minds."

Seeing then that even Protestant ministers are accustomed to "attack the common version in their sermons, and always mend their text before they preach from it;" that it has been found necessary to mend the whole Bible, by issuing new translations by which its form and features are essentially changed; that the most numerous Protestant denomination in the United States—the Baptists, have repeatedly in the Annual Reports of their Bible Society, denounced the common Protestant version, as "shedding disastrous light upon men" and as "having done evils which no tongue can tell;" it is to be wondered at that the Catholic clergy should also attack the same corrupt version, and prefer their own version!

And as we hold as "the honest convictions of our minds," that the circulation of the Protestant Bible without note or comment to enable the unlearned reader to apprehend rightly the true sense and meaning of many obscure and equivocal passages, has "done evils which no tongue can tell;" we should not inconsistently with those honest convictions, were we directly or indirectly to aid or countenance the use or circulation of a book which "presents the truth in dim eclipse, and sheds disastrous light upon men."—*N. Y. Freeman's Journal*.

A SERMON

On the Roman Catholic Controversy. preached in the Unitarian Church, Washington, October 30th, 1842, by S. G. Bulfinch.

This discourse has been delivered in consequence of the recent efforts to excite public feeling against Catholics. The results to which these efforts naturally lead are well pointed out, and illustrated by a notice of the successful labors of Dr. Beecher at Boston.

"For several years past, much has been said of the rapid growth of Roman Catholic influence in our country. Many persons, believing that influence to be hostile to liberty and true religion, have come forth in open and strong opposition to it. Discourses have been delivered, volumes published, even associations formed for the purpose of defending the principles of Protestantism, supposed to be in danger, and of attacking that which has been called the Man of Sin, the mysterious Babylon of the Revelations. The champions have not been wanting in the lion-like spirit of the early reformers. Some of us can testify, from what we have heard within a few days, to the learning and eloquence which have been engaged in the cause. And, having no reason to doubt the sincerity of those distinguished theologians who, on three successive evenings of the past week, have chosen this for their theme, we admire their talents and respect their zeal.

And yet the question cannot but occur to us, why is all this? Why is civilized, free and peaceful America, where there is no inquisition, and where Romanism is decidedly in the minority, should the most powerful denominations be called on to unite in putting down one, whose members are as correct in their deportment as any of their fellow-citizens? Why should the Papal Church alone be judged not from its present, but from its past character while we readily draw the veil of charity over the errors and crimes of other denominations in days gone by? Why, if the controversy must be waged, can it not be conducted, as other controversies are, upon grounds of doctrine, instead of being almost exclusively confined to the much more irritating discussion of the actions of the Church itself and of its members.

To myself these questions have occurred with the more force; in consequence of the deep impression made by transactions of which I was, to some extent, a witness. Several years since I heard on a Sabbath evening, in Park Street Church, Boston, a discourse on this subject from one of the most able and influential divines of the present day. The impression produced by the discourse was not unlike that of the eloquent addresses to which you have this week listened. The same distinguished preacher had addressed two other audiences on the same day, upon the same subject. This was on Sunday—There then stood a Catholic convent within three miles of where the preacher addressed us. On the Tuesday night following, that convent was burned to the ground, the peaceful females who inhabit-

ed the building, some of them in feeble health, roused at the dead of night, were driven forth with insult from their home—the very repose of the tomb was violated, and the sepulchre was rudely searched, in the hope of finding evidence there that might be rendered available against the occupants of the mansion. The poor Irish laborers of the vicinity, with their wives and children, fearing that the next blow would fall on them, fled from their homes, and passed successive nights in the open air. Never have I doubted that the discourse I heard, and such discourses, were among the chief causes of that most lamentable, most disgraceful event. And if it now needs any excuse that I raise my voice against what I consider persecution, the impressions produced by that occasion must serve the purpose.

The Charleston convent riot is not the only occurrence in the history of the past, which gives warning of the dangerous results that may occur from combined and long continued invective against an unpopular sect. What reader of English history knows not the name of Titus Oates? This man, in the reign of Charles II. invented the story of a plot among the Catholics, to murder that monarch, and seize the government of the kingdom. Popular rage was soon excited, and the courts gave it their sanction; the king, though himself more probably a Catholic in disguise than likely to be the victim of Catholics, had not principle and courage enough to stop the persecution; but when numbers of innocent victims had shed their blood, the nation started back, as the rays of returning common sense revealed the scene of destruction in which it had become engaged.

For another striking illustration of the evils resulting from the course of controversy, which I am now deprecating, let me refer you to the tumults excited in London by Lord George Gordon, in the latter part of the last century. There existed at that time in England certain test oaths, and other means of exclusion or oppression bearing hard upon Roman Catholics—for the abolition of some of which the eloquent preacher of last Sabbath evening expressed his regret. The zealous Protestants began to fear that these restrictions upon their Catholic neighbors would be abolished. A proposition to that effect had been presented in parliament. A tumultuous assemblage of many thousands, led by Lord George Gordon, an insane nobleman, took upon themselves the defence of Protestantism. They attacked & destroyed the dwellings of numerous Catholics, as well as their places of worship, produced extensive conflagrations in many parts of London, and after committing the greatest outrages and destroying many lives, were at length reduced to subjection only by a strong military force. So great was the emergency that the king himself, George III., firm and consistent Protestant as he was, was on the point of leading his own life-guards to the protection of his Catholic subjects, and the rescue of his capital city. Yet Lord George Gordon committed all his atrocities in the abused name of Protestantism, and under the influence of a similar excitement to that which has recently been attempted to be kindled here.

Of course I do not mean in this narration, to charge upon those who now oppose the Catholics, any intention or desire to resort to violent measures. But Lord George Gordon, when brought to trial, was acquitted, as he evidently had not directed or anticipated the evils resulting from his enterprise. It is much easier to kindle popular fury than to allay it."