

Ecclesiastical.

To the Editor of the Dublin Wander.

HOW IS THE ROMAN CATHOLIC AN IDOLATER?—IMAGES AND PICTURES—THE VIRGIN'S PICTURE AGAIN—THE CHRISTIAN CHRISTMAS.

Sir—The charge of idolatry against the Church of Rome is a grave and solemn charge, and not made lightly or rashly. It is the awful warning of God's word that "all idolaters shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Apoc. xxi. 8), and therefore no matter how honest or sincere an idolater may be, his final doom is declared unless he repent and be "converted, and turn to the Lord his God and worship him in spirit and in truth, as the Father requireth all true worshippers to worship him." (John iv).

I have shown, I trust, with a clearness and force sufficient to startle and awake the conscience of any anxious and candid inquirer to the real nature and character of the acts of those who use images in their worship, no matter by what plea they attempt to justify themselves. The omniscient Searcher of all hearts has fully provided for all sorts of idolatry in the first and second commandments; in the first by forbidding that there should be any object of worship but the one true God, Jehovah; and in the second, by forbidding that any likeness or visible representation whatever should be used in giving adoration even to that one true God, much less to other beings which should not be worshipped at all.

I contend that both these commandments are violated by all those who worship according to the principles and practices of the Church of Rome: the first sinned against when the Roman Catholic lifts up either his heart or his voice to the Virgin Mary and asks her to intercede or intercede in his behalf. None should be prayed to but God himself; prayer is the highest act of devotion that can be done by the creature to the Creator; to pray to the Virgin Mary is to put her in the place of God; it is to deify her—to make a goddess of a sinful creature, and give her the high homage which is due only to the Triune Jehovah! and if this be not a violation of his first and great commandment, "Thou shalt have no other Gods but me," then language has lost its meaning and reason its use and end.

But the Roman Catholic transgresses likewise the second commandment, which forbids the use of images and representations in worship, when he worships even the Lord Jesus Christ by means of a crucifix or the sacramental bread. On entering the chapel he bends his knee to the thing upon the altar, whether he intend the crucifix or the consecrated bread, and by the act is a condemned idolater! "Thou shalt not bow down" to them is the true meaning of the original word, and neither sophistry nor fraud can elude its force. The dread even of their own weakened translation has driven the priests of the Church of Rome to shut out that portion of God's Ten Commandments from the shorter catechisms, lest the people should be startled and confounded, and abhor the degrading practice.

But pictures claim our attention no less than images, when used in worship. They have been advocated as useful and allowable, on the plea that they serve as books for the ignorant. Now for this point I must bring my readers' memory back to a rather famous picture which I have already introduced to them—I mean the picture of the Virgin, in the Jesuit's Chapel in Upper Gardiner-street. What is the lesson which that painting teaches to the unlearned beholder or worshipper? Is it a lesson of wholesome truth or fraudulent error? Is it that Mary was chosen of God, as the woman of whose substance the everlasting Son of the Father was to take his human nature, in order that therein he might fulfil the broken law and suffer and die for lost and ruined man, so as to be enabled freely to bestow upon him pardon and peace, and bring him into everlasting happiness and heaven? No; it teaches no such thing; it sets forth Mary as herself fulfilling the primal promise, and treading with her own foot upon the serpent's head, as if it was she who had conquered sin and Satan and triumphed over them gloriously, and not the meek and lowly Jesus, "the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," "who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree: that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice (meaning righteousness), by whose stripes you were healed" (Pet. ii. 24—Douay).

More commonly the pictures of Mary present Jesus as a baby in her arms, as if he now, in heaven, was as much under her control as he was when a helpless child at the breast; and this, too, teaches a lesson of error, by keeping out of view the full-grown manhood of the Saviour with its independence of thought and action, which might suggest to the mind that language which he used when he forbade her interference with the exercise of his divine prerogatives—"Woman what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come" (John ii. 4).

But the picture of the Jesuits transcends in iniquity all its fellows, and is honored with a number of visitors and a degree of attention that far out rival the picture of the Redeemer in the same building. Let any one that is curious in

the matter visit the chapel on Saturday evening and see for himself. Seemg is believing. All I ask any intelligent Roman Catholic to do is—first, to read carefully over Exodus xx. and Deuteronomy v., comparing the Douay with the Protestant version; and, then, divesting his mind of any bias to one side or the other, let him answer the question in his heart and conscience before the all-seeing God, as he beholds the votaries of Mary and their devotions in the presence and under the influence of her picture—are not these people transgressing the plain command of God by bowing down before the pretended likeness of the body of her, whose spirit has been exalted to happiness and heaven, where she now esteems it a glorious privilege to be enabled to "rejoice in God her Saviour" (Luke i. 47).

Let him repeat the words of the commandment, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above or the earth beneath, or of those things that are in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not adore them nor serve them: I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous," and let him well and calmly consider whether that commandment is or is not violated in the letter and in the spirit. It is idolatry to give religious homage to any being but the Triune Jehovah, or to give it even to Him by means of any visible thing made for such a purpose. The Israelites were idolaters when they worshipped God by the golden calf that Aaron made (Exod. xxxii.); and again, when they used the golden calves that Jeroboam set up in Dan and Bethel to keep the people from going up to Jerusalem to worship (Kings iii. 12—Douay).

To direct a prayer to Mary at all is idolatry; for it is giving to her what should be given only to the Almighty. To direct a prayer to her, using an image, is a double idolatry, and by one act breaks two commandments. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John, v. 21).

But with what thoughts and feelings should the devout Christian pass this sacred season of the year? What should be his memories of the past, and hope and prospects for the future? What should be his cause of thankfulness and joy in commemorating the advent of the Saviour upon earth? Should it not be that God was for our sakes manifested in the flesh—that the Eternal Son took our nature into union with his Divinity, in order to atone for our sins and open heaven to the guilty? Should not our thankfulness be that he who was a babe in a manger became a man, and in his full-grown manhood suffered and died, and rose again, and ascended on high, and is at the right hand of God, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us, and is ever able and willing and ready to hear and to help and to save for ever all them that come unto the Father through Him, who is the one mediator between God and men, and the sinner's only advocate with the Father.

I am, &c., A. TRUE CATHOLIC.

GROWTH OF CATHOLICISM.

The Tribune states that the first Catholic Church in New York (the second in the state) was opened in 1786; the eighteenth and nineteenth were opened in 1849. The Truth Teller estimates the present Catholic population of that city at 100,000. The "Catholic Almanac for 1850" says there are now in the United States 2 Archbishops, 24 bishops, 1081 Priests, and 1078 Churches—an increase of 1 Bishop and 150 Priests within the past year. Of these Priests, 52 were ordained in the United States. If California and New Mexico be included, the Catholic Priests are 1141, and the Churches 1133. The Catholic population of the Union is estimated at 1,473,350, or if Upper California and New Mexico be included, at 1,533,350. It will be understood that the rapid and vast accessions to the Catholic strength in this country, are due mainly to emmigration.

WESLEYAN METHODIST AFFAIRS IN ENGLAND.

The agitation, which for some time past has exerted such a potent influence on this community, is, we learn from the British Banner of the 2nd and 9th ult., still gaining strength. In the appointment of Stewards on some of the circuits a good deal of hostility has been awakened—the preachers unwilling to nominate those whom the membership approved, and the quarterly meetings rejecting the parties nominated by the superintendent preachers. The President of the late Conference has issued a manifesto or declaration, which it appears assumes a hostile position with regard to the expelled ministers, their supporters and the agitation in progress. This, as might be expected, has given a fresh impetus to the advocates of reform in the polity of the Church; and has called forth documents of an opposite character, from the parties opposed. The great Meeting of delegates from all parts of England is to be held the second week in March, in the city of London—"to consider," says the Banner "the present state of the Connexion and seek for such Reforms as may be deemed necessary: and it is understood that each protesting circuit will send two or more." Our readers may form some idea of the extent of the changes contemplated from the following extract from a declaration published by "Leaders, Superintendents,

Trustees, Stewards, Local preachers, Sunday School Superintendents and others—all sustaining some office—in the Bradford and Great Holt circuits] filling nearly a column of the Watchman Times." They affirm that—

Nothing will "satisfy the Wesleyan public but the appointment of laymen as Treasurers of all the Connexion funds; the discontinuance of the Nominating Committee; the choosing all Committees by ballot, the right of the Societies in all official meetings—such as leaders' and quarterly meetings—to memorialise the Conference on any subject that bears, in their opinion, on the interest of the Connexion; the admission of lay delegates into the district meetings and the Conference, with the right of the Press to be present, and a rigid investigation of all the Connexion funds, by some competent lay persons."

LETTERS RECEIVED.—Revs. J. Bell; J. Roof; T. Brown; B. P. Browne; Messrs. T. O. Adams; C. Moore, rem.

NEW SUBSCRIBERS.—Revs. J. Bell, 11; T. Brown, 1; B. P. Browne, 7; J. W. G. Rogers, 12; F. Haynes, 1; Messrs. S. Heskett, 2; C. Moore, 1; T. O. Adams, 1; G. Jackson, 4.

The Watchman.

Monday Evening, February 4, 1850.

TRAVELLING AGENTS.

We have great pleasure in stating that in addition to Mr. E. JACKSON, the Reverend F. HAYNES is engaged as a travelling Agent to obtain subscribers, &c. &c., on account of the Watchman.

TO SUBSCRIBERS.

Parties to whom the Watchman is sent, and who do not intimate their intention to the contrary, will, after the issue of No. 4, be considered subscribers. Some individuals receive a paper for three or six months and then think themselves exempt from all liability because they refuse to take it any longer—not knowing that having received four Nos. they are legally responsible for payment. This notice is intended to prevent annoyance either to ourselves or others.

TO AGENTS.

We cannot in too strong terms express our thanks to those parties who have intimated their intention, either by letter or otherwise, to exert themselves to promote the circulation of the Watchman. Other parties who feel warranted in co-operating similarly are respectfully requested to communicate the same as soon as convenient.

THE GREAT CONFLICT.

The theatre of this world is at the present moment the scene of a momentous conflict. Indeed ever since the days of primeval purity, when the first happy pair lived in the unclouded light of God's countenance, a struggle has been in progress. Sometimes we have seen the cause of righteousness prevailing and spreading over the nations of the earth, and again the page of history records the melancholy prevalence of error and impiety. The antediluvians perished in their sin, and the builders of Babel were put to confusion. The Gentile nations rejected the true God; and frequently the Jews wickedly departed from Him.—It is, however, a remarkable fact, that under the old dispensation, the idolatrous systems which prevailed among the heathen, exhibited more of the aggressive spirit, and obtained wider conquests than did the Jewish Church. Although, at the commencement of the present dispensation, there were some proselytes to the Jewish religion who were rescued from the embrace of heathenism; yet the Jewish Church at that period was by no means so large as it was several centuries previous. The whole economy of the old dispensation was alloyed by the institutions of heathenism, and the worse than foolish innovations of Jewish Doctors; and hence, while the grandeur of the Jewish Church, at some periods of her history, awakened in the surrounding nations sentiments of admiration, emotions of reverential awe—it is manifest that the light of that dispensation was incompetent to the subjugation and regeneration of the world. So cheerless and melancholy was the condition of the world when the gospel light ushered in a new era, that the prophet exclaims—"darkness hath covered the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people."

It remained for the God-man to introduce a system imbued with infinite benevolence and unfading youth, and destined to triumph in the earth. No sooner had Christianity displayed its inherent energy, than its most inveterate foes trembled in contemplation of the glory it emitted and the victories it achieved. To mistaken apostles, and others, the sufferings of the cross, and the melancholy gloom of the sepulchre, appeared to bedim the glory which a life of spotless purity and unparalleled benevolence exhibited. How erring, at best, is feeble man! The very events which infused dismay and disquietude into the hearts of the disciples, marked the dawn of an era, in the consummation of which the Redeemer's triumphs will be asserted on every shore, and His name praised in every language.—But this happy age has not yet arrived.

In every period of her history, the Church has encountered formidable opposition. Amid imprisonment, exile, and the burning "faggots," the genuine adherents of Christianity have nobly avowed their profession. Truth has ever had witnesses; although sometimes the precious monument was well nigh wasted, yet all the persecutions—Jewish, Heathen, Infidel and Popish, which have raged, have

failed to divest Christianity of its aggressive character.—From age to age it has lived, and to some extent triumphed. When decline characterized the professed Church of Christ, Providence raised up men of courage and full of zeal for the cause of truth;—men who hazarded their lives for the gospel's sake, and whose names will live on the annals of time as the best friends of our race and the true servants of God. While by the agency of Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Knox, Whitefield, Wesley, Fletcher, and their coadjutors, the banner of truth was unfurled, and the prevailing erroneous tenets of a degenerate Church and benighted world, pointed out, and truth's most gladly enrolled themselves among the Saviour's witnesses.

Since the commencement of the present century, the conflict between truth and error has assumed a new phase. To a great extent the barbarities with which the adherents of truth were previously assailed, have been abandoned. In some European countries, the cruelties of a less enlightened age are still practised, though in a restricted form. But the views and conduct of the nations of Europe differ widely from what they were half a century ago. A greater amount of intelligence among the people has rendered the old inquisitorial style of treating opponents, to say the least, unpopular. Even in the strong holds of the Papacy, the late seat of the Beast, (though we do not imagine the spirit of the system or the priesthood materially improved,) such is the unpopularity of those horrid cruelties, which have stamped the Eternal City with eternal infamy,—that these relentless executioners have been compelled to sheath their "thirsty blades."

The conflict we say, however, has assumed a new phase. The physical-force-argument is well nigh driven from the field; and the issue now pending is to be decided principally by moral weapons. The days of martyrdom may return; and the Church may have to seal the truth with the blood of her choicest sons. Antichrist may again usurp the throne, and another "reign of terror" may put the followers of the Saviour to the most searching test.—But such a state of things will be short-lived; and such unhallowed weapons will never decide the great questions at issue. Though the struggle be mighty and protracted, though it bring every being in the universe into the conflict, yet will the victory be achieved by moral power.—The clangor of the battle-field, the roar of cannon, the clash of warriors' swords, the groans of expiring victims, the shouts of carnal victors will all be hushed into silence; while the inhabitants of heaven, earth and hell, in opposite phalanx, await the issue. Already the contending powers have sounded the alarm; and every thing which can possibly subvert the cause espoused, is pressed into service. Sciences, Arts, Literature, &c. &c., have, in vain, been enlisted for the subversion of the truth. Indeed for a time the sceptic boasted of victory; but the giants in the cause of God, who have entered the lists with the boasting infidel, have drawn from every department of science and art and literature the most substantial arguments in favor of Divine Revelation. The foes of simple, revealed truth have compassed nature, with a liquidarian research, hoping to find something whereby to obscure the Son of Righteousness, or weaken the force of the written word. To their sad dismay, however, in attempting to undermine, they have only exposed to view the immovable foundation upon which rests the stately superstructure of eternal truth.

For ages, the opposers of the doctrines of Christianity, have viewed, with complacency, the systematic exclusion of the truths of the blessed gospel, from the greater part of our race. National arrangements have, in many instances, excluded the gospel, and its heaven-appointed expounders, from millions of our race. Superstition and bigotry and priestcraft have closed the eyes of millions more against the light which shone around them. But "what hath God wrought?" in our day. What open doors has he placed before his Church! India, China, Africa, the savages of the wilderness and desert, and the cannibals of the ocean, are rendered accessible. Rome thirsts for the unadulterated truth of God; and where the Lutheran reformation began, the most fearful and conflicting elements operate; doubtless, preparatory to the issue which must shortly arrive.

Situated thus, the adherents of truth, as might be anticipated, have made some bold onsets against the enemy's fortress. Bible and Tract and Missionary Societies are the in operation; and on many a distant shore Missionary bands are disseminating that truth which is the sinner's only ground of hope. But while Christians are thus engaged, the children of darkness, finding themselves incompetent to weaken the force or prevent the spread of truth, are exerting their influence to counteract the tendency of the gospel, by giving publicity to their own crude imaginings. For a time it appeared as if the sons of night were determined to keep in advance. They seemed resolved to drag the champions of truth into the field of contest. But the tardy movements of the Church, a century ago, are so far exceeded by her present efforts that the opposing forces are outstripped. "Many run to any fro, and knowledge is increased." Yet there remains much land to be possessed, there are greater victories to be achieved. And in this conflict a line of demarcation is drawn between the servants of God and the votaries of Baal. No neutral ground can be occupied; we either honor God and serve the interest of truth, or fight against God and oppose the gospel. Solemn spectacle! With what interest do angels gaze upon it!

But does the reader inquire what are the conflicting elements? And what are the questions at issue? The conflicting elements are, sin and holiness, and their concomitants misery and happiness—the light of heaven and darkness of the pit, or truth and error—the enlightened, liberal sentiment inspired by revelation, in opposition to the superstition and bigotry and sectarianism of the dark ages. The questions at issue are, shall man as a social being, as a citizen, and as an accountable agent, enjoy those rights and privileges for which the economy of infinite Wisdom has made provision; or shall his rights and privileges be circumscribed by the will of civil or ecclesiastical despots, or unjust enactments in Church and State? Shall the word of God be received as the rule of Christian faith, practice and privilege; or shall those be bound by the traditions and guesses of priests? Shall the Church be