

## A PROTESTANT'S APPEAL TO THE DOUAY BIBLE.\*

Closely connected with the "*cultus sanctorum*," is the use which the Catholic Church makes of images, and pictorial representations of sacred persons and subjects, as adjuncts to the Christian's worship of Almighty God. This, even more than the Invocation of Saints, has been made the grounds of the charge of idolatry—or the giving to creature that which is due only to Creator—which Protestants prefer against her. A few words on the use of images and pictures, and the reasons of the Church for allowing their use, may not be out of place ere we conclude our review of this chapter of Mr. Jenkins' invectives against the Catholic Church.

The whole controversy betwixt Catholics and Protestants as to the use of images, and pictorial representations, of sacred persons and subjects, is comprised in the following two questions:—

1. Is it lawful to make, or retain in our temples, such images, or pictorial representations?

2. If it be lawful to do so, how should they be treated?—with respect, or with disrespect?

The Council of Trent answers both these questions. To the first it replies—that it is lawful to make such images, or pictorial representations, and that they should be retained in our temples:—

"Imagines porro Christi, Deiparæ Virginis, et aliorum sanctorum, in templis præsertim habendas et retinendas."—*Sessio xxv.*

And to the second, the answer as given by the same Council is, that such images or pictures should be treated with due respect:—

"Eisque debitum honorem, et venerationem imperitendam."—*Ib.* :—

Not however because of any divinity or virtue residing within them on account of which they should be worshipped:—

"Non quod credatur inesse aliqua in iis divinitas, vel virtus, propter quam sint colendæ."—*Ib.*

But solely because the respect which is paid to them is intended for those whom they are intended to represent:—

"Sed quoniam honores qui eis exhibetur refertur ad prototypa, quæ illæ representant."—*Ib.*

So that, when we incline the head before, or press our lips to, the image or picture of Christ, or the Saints, it is not to the image, but to Christ Himself that we offer homage—it is not the mere picture of the Saint, but the Saint himself who is represented by the picture, whom we venerate:—

"Ita ut per imagines quas osculamur, et coram quibus caput aperimus et procumbimus, Christum adoremus, et sanctos, quorum illæ similitudinem gerunt, veneremur."—*Ib.*

This is the doctrine of the Catholic Church: this the sole use of images or pictorial representations which she enjoins, or recommends. Against this doctrine and practice, Protestants protest, as idolatrous: urging the following objections in support of their protest:—

1. That they are repugnant to God's holy Word, as contained in the Decalogue.

2. That they are opposed to the practise of the Church in the first ages of Christianity, and reprobated by the early Fathers.

It is to these objections that we purpose to reply; still begging our readers to bear in mind that we are not attempting to defend, or justify the doctrines or practise of the Catholic Church. The Church requires no defence, stands in need of no justification, from any man; for if she be, what she claims to be—God's Church—then must all her teaching, and all her practises, be pure and holy. Our thesis is—not that the use of images as recommended by the Church is right and proper—but that the objections urged against that use, by Mr. Jenkins and the generality of Protestants, are destitute of any solid foundation.

To the first Protestant objection against the doctrine and practise of the Catholic Church, respecting the use of images, and pictorial representations of sacred persons and subjects, as adjuncts to Christian worship—that such doctrine and practise are repugnant to God's holy Word as contained in the Decalogue—it would be sufficient to reply—that, after all this objection amounts only to this—that such doctrines and practise are contrary to the Bible as he—the individual Protestant objector—understands it; and that, unless the Protestant can show that he is an infallible interpreter of Holy Writ, his objection is worth nothing at all—it being merely the opinion of a fallible individual, for which, in matters of religion, the Catholic does not care one straw. The latter has just as much right to assume that his interpretation of the Bible is the correct one, as has his Protestant opponent: he has, to say the least, quite as good opportunities for forming a correct opinion as to the meaning of God's Word, as has the other: and requires no assistance from any fallible individual whomsoever, in forming his opinions upon all matters connected with religion. If God have not given to him an infallible teacher in the Church, the Catholic will never submit to the humiliation of taking instruction from one who is not commissioned as a teacher, and who has therefore no more authority to teach or expound Scripture, and no better means of arriving at a true knowledge of the meaning of its contents, than he has himself. Either the Bible requires an interpreter or expounder, or it does not. If it does, God Himself, if just, must have appointed one: if it does not, it is the height of impudence for any man to take upon himself to expound, explain, or interpret Scripture, which needs no expounding. In neither case will the Catholic ever deign to submit his private opinion to that of any, or all, of the Protestant ministers who ever wearied their hearers with their prosy and impertinent harangues. The simplest answer then to give to any Protestant, objecting against Catholic doctrine, because opposed to the Bible, is—"My good sir, that is, as you understand it; I understand it differently; and, as I am quite as

good a judge of the true meaning of God's Word as you are, I intend to abide by my interpretation, as you are welcome to do by yours."

And here, as in all disputes about the true meaning of any law, whether human or divine, the controversy must terminate, unless there be a judge, or umpire, in whose decision the contending parties are willing to acquiesce. As Catholics and Protestants recognise no such authority competent to decide betwixt them, it is clear that all disputes betwixt them as to the true meaning of a disputed passage in the Bible—and the meaning of what passage has not been, and may not be, disputed?—must remain for ever undecided: but upon an undecidable controversy we have no intention to enter. All that the most rigid rules of controversy can require of us, is to show that the passages in the Bible, cited against us, are susceptible of an interpretation in accordance with our faith, and practise: and therefore we are willing to show how the precepts of the 1st Commandment of the Decalogue can be reconciled with the doctrine and practise of the Catholic Church—That it is lawful to make, and retain in our temples, images, or pictorial representations, of sacred persons or subjects.

The 1st Commandment, may, without doing violence to language, be so understood as to prohibit the making of images—not absolutely—but for a particular purpose; i. e. for the purpose of worshipping them as God, or Gods—or as possessed of some particular divinity, or virtue, residing in them, on account of which they should be worshipped, and by means of which they can help, or grant the prayers of, their votaries. Now as Catholics do not make, or use, images for this purpose, their faith and practise may easily be reconciled with God's Holy Word as contained in the Bible—which is all that we can be called upon to prove.

That the prohibition against the making of images is not absolute—but is directed only against making them for a particular purpose—is pretty clear, both from the positive instructions of the Giver of the Law, Who must have known its real meaning—and from the practise of those to whom it was given, a practise which was never rebuked by the great Lawgiver as an infraction of His divine commands. Thus, though forbidden by God to make unto themselves "a graven thing," Exod. 20, we find in the 25th chapter of the same book that the children of Israel were by Him instructed to make "two Cherubim of beaten gold"—the likenesses of which—"things in heaven above"—must have been *supernaturally* revealed to Moses by the Lord; as it is not to be supposed that even Moses any more than any other man, could have had, in virtue of his natural faculties, any intuitive apprehension of the likeness of a "Cherub;" and even at the present day, the most learned commentators, Jews as well as Christians, can at best form but vague conjectures of the likeness of these "graven" or perhaps "molten" images which, by God's command, Moses, and again Solomon, made for the service of the Most High God. From this positive command, and from the absence of any thing like a condemnation of the conduct of Solomon, in making images of oxen, in graving images of Cherubim on the walls, and in working figures of Cherubim in the veil of the temple—2 Par. c. 3.—we may conclude that the prohibition of the Decalogue, against making—"a graven thing"—or—"the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath"—was not absolute, but directed only against the making of such images for a particular purpose—viz., worshipping them as God or Gods. This prohibition therefore, is not irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Catholic Church at the present day.—That it is lawful to make, and retain in our temples, images, or pictorial representations, of sacred persons, or subjects.

Nor is it extravagant to suppose that these images, placed by God's command in the holy temple, were designed to subserve some purpose of religious worship. For God does not act capriciously, and all His commands are designed to serve some purpose; now, if these images of the Cherubim were not placed in the temple for a religious purpose, or to subserve some end connected with the worship of God, they must have been placed there for some other purpose; and it is for our opponents—who, admitting that it is lawful to make images, deny that it is lawful to make or use them for a religious purpose—to show for what purpose God commanded them to be made, and placed within the precincts of His holy temple: they will hardly venture to assert that these images were intended merely for ornament, or to please the wandering eyes of the worshippers. We therefore conclude, in the second place, that the prohibition of the Decalogue is not absolute against the making images for religious purposes, or as adjuncts to Divine worship.

We will next examine the second objection which Protestants urge against the making or retaining in our temples, images, or pictorial representations of sacred persons, or subjects—viz., that this custom is opposed to the practise of the Church in the first ages of Christianity, and reprobated by the early Fathers. To this objection we reply, that from the earliest period it was the custom of the Catholic Church to make such images, or pictorial representations—that the Fathers of the Church approved of the custom—and that therefore Protestantism, which condemns it, is not the "OLD RELIGION."

To the antiquity of the custom—the writings of the

\* If they had not been, in some sense, likenesses of Cherubim, these statues would have been, not images, but idols. † Josephus says—*Antiq.* 111. 6.—that, in his day, no one knew the form of these Cherubim, but that they resembled no creature ever seen by man. Eichen, and after him Gesenius, endeavor to identify them with the Persian "*griffins*," led astray, as much by their sceptical tendencies, as by curious etymological speculations; but the most common opinion, in which Calmet coincides, seems to be that the Cherubim united in one, the figures of the man, the ox, the eagle, and the lion—*vide Ezechiel* 1. 5.

Christians of the second century—and the paintings and carvings still visible on the walls of those caves in which the violence of persecution compelled the faithful to seek concealment during the celebration of their mysteries—bear incontestable evidence. The artist, who has no theological theories to maintain recognises the fact at once.—"Even during the reign of those emperors by whom the Christians were cruelly persecuted"—says Flaxman in his lectures on Sculpture—"when they were obliged to perform their sacred worship in subterranean, and sepulchral chambers, they ornamented these retreats with sacred portraits and subjects from Scripture"—Tertullian—*De pudicitia*—informs us that in his time it was customary to represent Christ as the Good Shepherd, bearing on His shoulders the lost sheep. It was also common, at the same early period, to represent Him as the Lamb of God; and sometimes under the figure of a fish (*ikthus*) a word composed of the initials of the titles, in Greek, of "Jesus Christ the Son of God our Saviour": hence the term often applied to the early converts—"pisciculi."

As the numbers and wealth of the Christians increased, so did the magnificence of their churches, and the ornaments with which the piety of the faithful delighted to adorn them. Sozomen, who wrote about the middle of the IV. century, mentions a famous statue of Christ, in the time of the apostate Julian; and from other early writers, we learn that Constantine commemorated the spot where he received baptism, with the image of a lamb in gold, flanked, on the right by a silver statue of our Saviour, and on the left by one of St. John the Baptist—*Dam. in vita Sylv.* To these we may add the evidence of Eusebius l. vii—who mentions the image of Christ at Paneas, which he had himself seen, adding also that similar images, as well as those of the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, were to be seen in many other localities. We might cite many other writers of the same age, who bear the clearest testimony to the fact that, long before their time, it was the custom of the Christians to make images, or pictorial representations of sacred persons and subjects: but we have said enough on this part of our thesis.

This custom was approved of by the Church. For of these images, many were employed to decorate the consecrated vessels employed in the celebration of her sacred mysteries; the Chalices as we learn from Tertullian, were almost always thus ornamented. In the Liturgy of St. Chrysostom we find the image of Christ mentioned, and approved of; for the officiating priest is instructed to bow the head before it; and from the hymns of St. Paulinus of Nola, and Prudentius, we learn that, in the IV. century, the images of Christ's Saints, and their sufferings, were pictured over the altars beneath which their relics reposed: a fact which establishes this—that, at that period, as well as in the preceding, the Church recognised the propriety of making, and retaining in the temple, images, and pictorial representations of sacred persons, and subjects.

To this mass of positive testimony in favor of the antiquity of the custom, Protestants oppose—Firstly—Can 36. of the Council of Eliberis, held in Spain. A.D. 305, condemning the practice of painting the objects of religious veneration upon the walls of the churches, "*ne id quod colitur et adoratur in parietibus depingatur*,"—and secondly, a passage in a letter from Epiphanius to John of Jerusalem, A. D. 390, in which the writer relates how, having seen the image of a man painted on a cloth hanging in a certain church, he destroyed it as a violation of the Scriptures.

To these objections we reply. Firstly, that the Canon of Eliberis, quoted against us, is as susceptible of an interpretation in our favor—and secondly—that the passage quoted from Epiphanius is spurious, being manifestly an addition made to the original text of the writer, at a late date.

Remark the wording of the Canon. It is not—*ne id quod depingitur, adoratur*—but—*ne id quod adoratur, depingatur*, and that, not as a general rule, but only—"in parietibus"—on the walls. Moveable paintings, or images, were not condemned, from which we may conclude that, as the Council prohibited the one, it sanctioned the other. If we take into account the epoch at which this Council of Eliberis was held, and the dangers against which it had to guard, the reason for this distinction, and for the prohibition of fixed or immovable pictures such as frescoes on the walls of the churches, becomes at once apparent. On the 24th of February, A.D. 303, Diocletian, at the instigation of Galerius, had issued his famous edict against the Church of Christ, which was thus obliged to concert measures to evade the fury of her persecutors. Images of Christ and His Saints, immovably painted on the walls of the churches, would have been exposed to the insult and riddance of the pagan soldier: it was therefore a prudent precaution—A.D. 305—to prohibit such paintings; but at the same time, one which may be, as prudently, neglected now, when the reasons which called it forth, no longer existing, we may safely return to the practise which obtained before the Council of Eliberis.

That the passage attributed to Epiphanius—A.D. 390—is spurious, Ballarmin gives the following reasons for believing:—

1. Its position—occurring in the form of a postscript, ill according with the letter itself, and totally unlike the style of the writer to whom it is attributed; besides, it is well known that the writings of Epiphanius have been subjected to several interpolations by heretics.

2. That this passage, apparently so conclusive, was never cited by the opponents of images, although they used the utmost diligence in raking together everything from the Fathers which could tell in their favor. St. Gregory too, in writing to Serenus, blames him

\* Tertullian, *De Bapt.*

as the first Bishop who had ever destroyed an image of Christ or His Saints; and St. Jerome, though professedly giving the whole of the letter of Epiphanius in which this passage is said to occur, makes no mention of it: a sure proof, that it was unknown in the V. century, and conclusive to all who are accustomed to sifting evidence.

With these remarks we shall conclude for the present. Having shown, we trust, that we do but follow the practise of the early Church in making, and retaining in our temples, images, or pictorial representations, of sacred persons, and subjects—and that this practise is not condemned by the Word of God, or at variance with the practise of God's chosen people—we propose, in our next, to discuss the question—How should these images or pictures be treated?—with respect, or with disrespect?—and to offer a few observations upon Mr. Jenkins' definitions of idols and idolatry—which like most of his other definitions are exceedingly vague and unsatisfactory.

The Court of Queen's Bench has been in session all the week, but as yet nothing has been done with the cases springing out of the Gavazzi riots: the Bills we understand will be laid before the Grand Jury to-day. We hear that indictments will be preferred against certain individuals from Quebec, as accessories to the murder of Walsh and Donnelly.

We have been authorised by B. Devlin, Esq., Attorney-at-Law, to state that the indictment against James Moir Ferres, for obscenity, was not presented at the instance of the Catholic "Vigilance Committee." The *Gazette*, upon a mere suspicion expressed by the *Minerve*—that it was by that Committee that the prosecution against the unprincipled editor of the former journal had been undertaken—censures the proceedings of that body as inquisitorial, and impertinent; forgetting that a self organized society in London, "the Society for the Suppression of Vice," often took it upon itself to institute actions against lewd and dirty fellows, guilty of offences against common decency, analogous to the nasty crime for which James Moir Ferres is about to answer before the country. The *Minerve* will please copy.

Gavazzi and the Siamese Twins have both been exhibiting at Buffalo during the past week. Every thing passed off quietly; but it is said that Gavazzi is jealous of the superior attractions of the "Twins," for few respectable persons, and no Catholics, took the least notice of him during his visit. The *Buffalo Sentinel* puts him down as a poor specimen of a "Scouper," after all; not worth listening to.

We have much pleasure in inserting the following minutes of a meeting of Irish Catholics at St. Catherine's: we trust that their example may be generally followed:—

At a meeting of the Irish Catholics of St. Catherine held on Sunday the 16th inst., for the purpose of giving expression to their sentiments touching the present religious excitement, consequent on the Gavazzi riots, the following resolutions were duly moved, and unanimously adopted:—

Capt. Joseph Malony was called to the chair, and Mr. John Meolan requested to act as secretary.

Resolved, On motion of Mr. Patrick Coughlan, seconded by Mr. James Buckley:—

"That this meeting feels indignant at the efforts of the Protestant portion of the citizens of Quebec, particularly since the Gavazzi riots, as tending to stir up, and enkindle the flames of religious strife and discord."

On motion of Mr. Maurice Power, seconded by Mr. James Coughlan:—

"That although this meeting deeply deprecates the excesses that occurred at the Gavazzi riots, it cannot however, withhold its sympathy from those who have been unjustly accused; inasmuch as our common creed and country are attempted to be held up to execration by the Protestant press of this country."

On motion of Mr. James Barry, seconded by Mr. Maurice Dunn:—

"That this meeting views with horror the late attempt at the odious system of Jury-packing, for the purpose of condemning their fellow countrymen; a system which if followed up, would poison the sacred springs of justice, and render trial by Jury "a mockery a delusion, and a snare."

On motion of Mr. William McKennor, seconded by Mr. Michael Manning:—

"That as Irishmen, and Catholics, yielding to no class of her Majesty's subjects in loyalty and attachment to her person, it is our bounden duty to seek for a fair and impartial administration of justice."

On motion of Mr. William Guilfoyle, seconded by Mr. John Griffin:—

"That to counteract such baneful and pernicious efforts, this meeting hails the appointment of the Vigilance Committee of the Irish Catholics of Quebec, as a barrier against any encroachments on their civil and religious rights; and pledges itself when called upon, to sustain it, by whatever means may be legally available."

On motion of Mr. Francis McKennor, seconded by Mr. Cornelius McCarty:—

"That this meeting cannot see without disgust the sectarian and anti-national feelings of the Protestants of Quebec, as displayed against the Superintendent of Police, a gentleman pre-eminently qualified to discharge his official duties with honor and impartiality."

The Chairman having left the chair, Mr. Owen O'Sullivan was, on motion duly seconded, called thereto, when the thanks of the meeting were voted to the Chairman for his able and dignified conduct in the chair.

JOHN MEEHAN, Secretary.

St. Catherine, District of Quebec, Oct. 17, 1853.

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