

THE TRUE WITNESS AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE,

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AND
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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 1851.

The newspapers received by the *Canada's* mail, are singularly barren of interest; the most important intelligence being, that upon the 11th ultimo, the Ministry was again defeated by a majority of one, in a house of 239 members, upon Lord Duncan's motion, "That the gross income raised from the Crown Lands, should be paid into the Exchequer, and the expenditure be voted by the House, on estimates annually submitted to them, at the same time as the accounts of the other public departments." This defeat cannot be said to have materially affected the position of the ministry, because its doom was sealed long before; and although, owing to the weakness of their opponents in the present Parliament, and to the inconveniences attendant upon a general election during the great exhibition, the present men may be permitted to hold office a few weeks, or even months longer, it is certain that the Russell Ministry is virtually dead, and allowed to remain above ground, till such time only, as some charitable person shall be found willing to confer upon it the honors of a decent interment. Bitterly must Lord John now regret his rash Durham letter; but for that famous epistle, the people of England would not have been excited to madness, making themselves the laughing-stock of Europe, nor would he have been compelled to introduce his bill against Papal aggression. His sin has not been long in finding him out; he has forever lost the support of the Irish Catholic, and liberal members, who will never forgive him for what he has endeavored to do, and he has not conciliated the rabid Protestant party, whose fanaticism he has shocked by the feebleness of what he has done. Little inclined to view the bill even before its modifications, with a favorable eye, they are still less disposed to accept of it, now that it is proposed to retrench those clauses which promised to afford facilities for cheating Catholics out of their property. To these men, Religious Freedom is worthless, unless in so far as it gives to them the power of robbing and despoiling Catholics. "Pretty land of Religious Liberty this," they say, "where we can't wallop our own Papists;" and now Lord John, with his modifications, come cranking in, and cuts them out from the best part of the bill. Hard this, and not to be endured. Why, the clauses which aimed at robbing the Church of the charitable bequests of her children, were the very salt of the bill, from which alone it received its savor; and now that these are withdrawn, Mr. Plumtree makes wry faces at it, and even the strong stomachs, the *dura ilia* of Sir Robert Inglis and his brother bigots, reject it with loathing. Yet even these modifications will fail in rendering the measure one whit more acceptable to the Irish; in the language of His Grace the Archbishop of Tuam, "No mitigation of the bill, nothing short of its utter extinction, will satisfy the people of Ireland." We hope that the Ministry will be wise in time, and retrace their steps. They have a war upon their hands in Caffraria, which will cost a round sum before peace is restored; but a civil war in Ireland will prove a more serious affair—and the Irish, fighting in the best, the holiest of causes, will be more dangerous enemies to their Protestant tyrants, than a parcel of half-naked savages.

MURDER—THE CONFSSIONAL.

A Clergyman has favored us with a copy of the *Cork Constitution* of 4th Feb. in which we find the following appalling disclosure respecting the Confessional.—*Montreal Witness*.

The *Standard* of Thursday contains a letter from Mr. Swayne, late a Priest of the Church of Rome, from which we extract the following:—

"Let no one, therefore, be horrified when I state that, it was believing in, and acting on, this teaching, that I myself in the year 1832 evaded the law of God and man, reason and nature, in withholding from the arm of justice 12 or 14 persons who had confessed to me their intentions of taking a part in the murder of the 45 constabulary that took place in the summer of that year at Carrickshock, near Knocktopher, county Kilkenny. These men came promiscuously to me to confess, at the convent of Knocktopher, in which I was stationed at the time; each "confessed" to me not alone his intention, but determination, to have a hand in the murder in case the constabulary came, as we expected, to distract in his village; the sequel proved the murderous premeditation of each, for seven of the same men were afterwards taken up and brought to Kilkenny, where two of them were hanged; the rest escaped justice, possibly through my fault—inasmuch as, had I been at liberty to give the least intimation to the proper authorities of what was (superstitiously) confessed to me two months before the murder, I would have been imprisoned, and the unfortunate victims who came, in discharge of their duties, to the fatal village, would have returned home with their lives. In all probability the same terrific

tale could be told by the Rev. Mr. W—, P. P., of Newtownbarry, where a like number of men were murdered some three years after in a similar manner and on a similar occasion; and I am confident, there are priests this moment in Ireland—yes, hundreds of them—who could, if they dare, tell us they have been cognizant, if not abettors, through the confessional, of the conspiracies and treasonable practices and intentions of their people towards the government of this country in the ever memorable year of 1848.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your most humble and obliged servant,

"RICHARD SWAYNE, M.S.T.,
(Late a Priest of the Church of Rome,
"now under the P.P. Protection Society.)
"Dublin, Jan. 27, 1851."

We copy the above as a very fair sample of the arguments which Protestants bring against Catholics, and as a specimen of the heavy artillery, with which they hope to batter down the bulwarks of the Church. Unable to meet their adversaries in the open field, and afraid to encounter them in fair fight, Protestants have adopted the tactics of a guerilla warfare, and trust, that by harassing an outpost here, or picking up a chance straggler there, as in the case of this fellow Swayne, they may be able to earn for themselves the laurels, which belong, by right, to the heroes of a well-stricken field. Of all the doctrines of the Church of Christ, there is none so hateful to Protestant ears, as the stern command, "Confess your Sins." It was a hard saying of our Saviour to the young man, diligently enquiring after a royal road to Heaven—"If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor;" and, therefore, when the young man heard those words, he went sorrowful away; and how many are there at the present day, whom the dread of confession sends sorrowful away from the gates of the Church? Fasting, confession, and chastity, are precepts against which the unregenerate, or Protestant heart of man does most naturally revolt; and it is, therefore, to be expected, that sometimes one, sometimes another of these Catholic practices, shall be the especial objects of Protestant hostility. In this case, it is against the confessional, that the adversary directs his attack; not as against something *malum per se*, but as against an institution that may be abused. Certainly, there is no institution so pure, no command of God so excellent, but that the ingenuity of the corrupt heart of man can turn it to his own destruction; he can mix poison with his daily bread; he can pervert the life-giving Sacraments of the Church to his eternal ruin, eating and drinking unto himself damnation; but it is unfair to argue against the use of an institution from its abuse, or to teach that men should altogether abstain from the Holy Table, because some have been guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Premising this much, let us look at the story which stands at the head of this article, and examine it; whether in the first place, it be worthy of credit, and in the second, whether, even if it be true, any argument against the doctrine of confession, can be based thereon. Well, this Swayne, an apostate priest, (and we all know what apostate priests really are, men who, by their crimes, sometimes drunkenness, sometimes incontinence, or dishonesty, have rendered themselves unfit for the Church, and, therefore, very fit for the conventicle, like *Achilles*, of *Dublin Review* notoriety,) this Swayne tells us, that twelve or fourteen persons came to him, and confessed their intention of committing the sin of murder. We have no means of saying whether this story be true, or false; but we see at once that it is very unlikely. Men have generally some object in all their actions, especially when they involve a very disagreeable and humiliating practice—such as the confessing one's sins. Now, the object of confession is to obtain, through the application of the merits of our Redeemer's Cross and passion, remission of sins, and reconciliation with an offended God. For this purpose, the most ignorant Catholic who ever approached the confessional, well knows, that certain acts and dispositions are indispensably necessary on his part—First, a strict examination of conscience, accompanied with humble prayer to Almighty God, that He would, for His dear Son's sake, give to him a clear view of his iniquities, and a lively horror and detestation of all sin, as offensive to a God of infinite Holiness and purity; and secondly, a firm determination with God's assistance, to flee for the future from all sin, and all the immediate occasions of it, and to lead a pure and holy life. There is not a Catholic in the world, who does not know, that without these dispositions upon his part, not only is the absolution pronounced by the priest null and void, but that it is rather a fearful aggravation of the indignation of God. But, in the case before us, the twelve or fourteen men must have known that by avowing their intention to commit sin, they could not even expect to receive absolution, and, therefore, they could have had no object in approaching the confessional at all. We, therefore, think it more than probable that the whole statement of this R. Swayne, is a lie.

But, even supposing the story to be true, what does it prove against the practice of auricular confession? We will be told, that the promise of inviolable secrecy, by which the priest is bound, is evil, because in this case, he was thereby prevented from giving notice of an intended crime. But it seems to be forgotten by the objectors, that but for this certainty of the secrets of the confessional being inviolable, the confession would never have been made. It was only upon the condition of his not revealing the secrets committed to him, that these men unbosomed themselves to the priest—and what law of God or man was there thereby infringed? What injury did society suffer? "Had I been at liberty," says Swayne, "to give the least intimation to the proper authorities, of what was confessed to me, the crime might have been prevented." Certainly—but had Swayne been at liberty to give the least intimation to any person of what was revealed to him in confession, he would never have heard a word about it. Had these men been Protestants, they could have formed the same deter-

minations, carried them into execution just as easily, the only difference being, that they would not have revealed their intentions to a priest, who, if he did his duty, would use every means in his power, entreaties, commands, the authority of the Church, and the threats of God's Eternal wrath, to induce them to abandon their impious designs—failing in which, he would dismiss them from his presence, not with absolution and words of peace, but with the anathemas of the Church, and the curses pronounced by God upon all impenitent sinners. To make out a case against the confessional, from this statement of R. Swayne, it must be proved, that by the priest's knowledge, under the seal of confession, of an intended crime, impediments in the way of its accomplishment were removed, or facilities afforded for carrying it into execution; if neither of these events occurred, then society suffered no injury, and no law of God or man was violated by the silence of the priest, who, to divulge the secrets of the confessional, must be guilty of perjury.

In another part of the same letter, this impudent apostate proceeds to inform us, that he is cognizant of "innumerable cases in which the confessor became *particeps criminis*, by learning, through the confessional, an intended seduction, a rape, or an actual adultery, and yet taking no steps beyond a few discouraging words, either to prevent them, or their natural, but woful consequences." Now, as it is certain that Swayne could have been cognizant, only of what took place in his own confessional, it follows that *he himself* is the priest alluded to, who became *particeps criminis*, by taking no steps, beyond a few discouraging words, to prevent the consummation of a premeditated iniquity, revealed to him in confession; and, as it was his bounden duty, to have used all the thunders of the Church, to prevent the perpetration of the crime revealed, every argument which the love of God, or the fear of Hell could supply, it is clear that by his own showing, he was guilty of gross dereliction of duty, even whilst pretending to administer the Sacraments of that Church, which is now happily rid of him. But silly as at first sight appear the anile drivellings which constitute the premises of Protestant logic, when pushed to their legitimate consequences, they lead inevitably to the most damnable and blasphemous conclusions. Thus, Melancthon, Calvin, Zuinglius, and the fathers of modern Protestantism, hesitated not to proclaim God as the cause of sin, "as much the author of the treachery of Judas, as of the conversion of St. Paul." Let us apply the Protestant principle of private judgment to the argument against the confessional, now before us. If the priest, (who is bound to inviolable secrecy, by the most solemn oaths,) by not divulging, or by not taking any steps to prevent the perpetration of a crime revealed to him in the confessional, becomes *particeps criminis*, an accomplice in crime, it follows *a fortiori*, that God, who is a free agent, to whom, in virtue of His omniscience, the secrets of all hearts are revealed, and who, by virtue of His omnipotence, is able to prevent the perpetration of crime, and who does not always reveal the sinner's intentions, or prevent their accomplishment, is also *particeps criminis*, a partaker of the sinner's guilt. Do our evangelical friends shrink from our conclusions? Then must they abandon their premises, and admit that a moral being may be cognizant of the intention to commit crime, able to prevent its accomplishment, and yet remain entirely passive in the matter, without becoming *particeps criminis*. We are also told, that it is taught in the confessional, "that it is criminal to keep faith with heretics; and that it is no sin to destroy, and to extirpate them, should the advancement of Romanism require it." We know not which to admire the more, the impudent mendacity of the liar who can make such an assertion, or the astounding folly of the fool who can believe it. It is not so much a libel on the Church, as an insult to the common sense of Protestants, and comes with a good grace, from a member of that Society, whose deliberate falsification of history, and contemptible ignorance, we exposed some weeks ago, when reviewing a little manifesto published by the "Apostate Priest's Protection Society," in which *Pope Bonaventure*, in 1358! was represented as the author of the *Psalter* of our Lady, and Gregory III., as excommunicating emperors who were not born till long after Gregory's death, all which was accepted as Gospel truth by the erudite editor of the *Montreal Witness*. Oh! Evangelicals, what a gullible set of mortals you are.

The *Toronto Church*, a paper which we have always considered as the organ of the High Church party in Upper Canada, seems to be inclined to become a member of the Evangelical Alliance; for no other reason, can we give, why it also has given insertion to Swayne's abuse of the practice of confession. Does the editor of the *Church* not know that auricular confession is a practice, which if not positively enjoined by the Establishment, is at least strongly recommended. Do not its liturgies exhort the sinner, to come to the officiating minister, "or some other discreet, and learned minister of God's Word, and open his grief?" Does not the office for the "Visitation of the Sick," expressly enjoin, that "the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins;" after which confession, the priest shall absolve him, by virtue of the authority committed to him by our Lord Jesus Christ. True, owing to a servile compliance with the lax morality of the age, this discipline has been greatly neglected by the ministers of the Church by law established, yet it is still retained by a few of the most zealous and devoted of her children. Now we would ask the editor of the *Church*, what opinion he would have of a clergyman of the Establishment, who should be guilty of divulging, or making any use of the secrets confided to him by his penitent, without the said penitent's consent? Would he not justly consider him as infamous? But perhaps the *Church* is prepared

to abandon its High Church ground, and maintain that the practice of confession, is not recommended by the Anglican Church, or if recommended, that it is not binding upon the laity. To judge from another article which appears in the *Church* of the 27th March, we should not be surprised if such were the case; for we find the writer, a member of the Establishment, objecting to the observance of Tuesday, the 25th March, as a festival of obligation, in the public offices in Upper Canada, because forsooth it is not a festival recognised by law! Law, or no law, the 25th of March, the "Feast of the Annunciation," is a festival of obligation in the Anglican Church, whose observance is particularly enjoined, and which has its proper lessons, collects, epistle and gospel, with a *vigil* or fast on the day preceding. But as the law can make a bishop, or lay an embargo upon the spiritual graces conferred in the Sacrament of Baptism, it has very likely the power to appoint and cancel the holidays of the Church. What a funny Church that must be, whose solemn festivals are regulated by law; there is but one step lower for her to fall: she should commit the administration of her Sacraments to a Bench of Magistrates.

The *Montreal Witness* has noticed our exposure of some of the impudent falsifications of Holy Writ, which occur in David Martin's version of the New Testament. The writer admits the discrepancies, but puts forward a plea, in mitigation of sentence, strongly reminding us of that poor Molly, when charged by her mistress, with being the unmarried mother of a child. "Yes Maam, I owns it—but then it is a very small one;" so also the conscious *Montreal Witness* admits the errors, but pleads that they are very small, and trivial indeed. Now we never quarrel about tastes, even when as in this case, they are perfectly beyond our comprehension. We know not what the *Montreal Witness* may consider trivial, but we as Catholics have been taught so to revere the Holy writings, that no error, no alteration, can appear to us, but as a sin of the highest magnitude. It is indeed of little consequence, whether in the farce which is sometimes enacted in the conventicle, as if in mockery of the Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice, the coffee and lemonade, or the turnips and cold water, which are sometimes used instead of bread and wine, be blessed by the presiding elder or no; perhaps it is better that the blessing should be dispensed with; but that is no reason why the priests of Christ's Holy Church should not warn their flocks of the damnable perversion of Scripture, in which impostors try to find a sanction for their proceedings, and put them on their guard, against the mass of falsehood and error, which designing hypocrites try to foist upon them as the Word of God.

With regard to the substitution of the word "contain" for "receive" being a "very trivial" error indeed, we have a few remarks to offer, which we hope will convince the editor of the *Montreal Witness*, how profoundly ignorant he is of the important results, which the alteration of a single word, or of a single letter in the inspired text may produce.

The intention of the Calvinistic translators of the Bible, in the mistranslation alluded to, was to get a written warrant for their argument, that Christ was *contained* in Heaven, in such a manner as to be excluded from the Holy Sacrament of the altar. They were clever fellows, but like many other clever rogues, outshot their mark, proving a good deal more than they had at first intended. Indeed, the text, however strong it may be against the Real Presence, is, upon Protestant principles, still stronger against the Supreme Divinity of Christ; for according to David Martin's Word of God, we read that "Christ is contained in Heaven," but in the English Protestant version of the Bible, 1 Chron., 6. c., 18 v., and again, 1 Kings, 6. c., 27 v., we read that heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain God. Now, if heaven cannot contain God, but does contain Christ, it is a self evident proposition that Christ is not God.

We restricted ourselves to citing four examples of the gross corruptions in David Martin's text, corruptions the more inexcusable, because he must have known that the old English Protestant version of the Word of God contained all the errors which we pointed out, as still existing in his version; and that it was not without good reason, that the English Protestant translators, corrected and amended their Word of God in 1683, moved thereunto by the ridicule which was heaped upon it by Catholic writers. David Martin knew when he published, and the evangelical missionaries know when they are circulating the book, that it is an impure version of God's Holy Word, and therefore worthy the reprobation and contempt of all honest men. Many more errors could we point out, only we do not think that a newspaper is the proper place for quotations from Scripture. We will however give the *Montreal Witness* one other text, and we have no doubt but that the Rev. Mons. Chiniquy will favor him with many more.

In Acts, 16 c. and 23 v., we would beg to be informed where David Martin found the words which we give in Italics, but which are printed in his version in the usual characters, as if they formed part of the original text, as indeed are his other corruptions. "And after that, by the advice of the assemblies, they had established ancients in each church." "Et après que, par l'avis des assemblées, ils eurent établi des ancients dans chaque église." If they do occur in any Greek manuscript, they are not to be found in any of the printed editions that we know of, and certainly are not rendered in the English Protestant version, which agrees with the Catholic version in every respect, except in rendering the word *presbuteros* as elders, instead of priests.

The following, which we extract from the lectures delivered some years ago at Rome, by his Eminence the present Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, will