

SELECTED.

MUSENBETH'S DEFENCE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Continued.

In St. Matt. xviii, 18, our Saviour assured his Apostles that whatsoever they should bind or loose upon earth, should be bound or loosed also in heaven. In St. John. xx, 22, he gave them the Holy Spirit, and declared that whose sins they should forgive, should be forgiven; and whose sins they should retain, should be retained. Now, how could the Apostles exercise this power, unless they knew what the sins were which they were to forgive or retain? And how could they come to this knowledge, except by the confession of those who had committed them? The power granted by Christ was clearly a judiciary power, which could only be exercised with full knowledge of the cause: such knowledge could only be obtained by the criminal's own confession. And thus the obligation of confession is clearly founded upon the Scriptures, no less than on the uninterrupted tradition of the Catholic Church, in every age from the Apostles.

Protestants have often repented of the abolition of confession, and earnestly desired its re-establishment. This can never be among those who have taught that Sacramental Confession was not instituted by the Divine Founder of Christianity. They will no more submit to such a yoke than the first Christians would have done, if they had not believed it of divine appointment.

It is a curious fact, that Mr. White's difficulties about Confession were very ably treated by a celebrated royal theologian, no less a personage than King Henry VIII, who wrote as follows, in his "Defence of the Seven Sacraments, against Luther."—"But as to Confession, if not a word was said or read in figure, or spoken by the Holy Fathers; yet when I see every one for so many centuries confessing his sins to the Priests, when from that very practice I behold so much good come, and no evil, I can neither believe nor think but that the practice was appointed and preserved, not by any human counsel, but by divine command. For neither could the people have been ever brought, by any human authority, to pour out in the ear of another, who could divulge them if he pleased, their most secret sins, of which their conscience gave them a horror, and which it was so much their interests to conceal, with so much confusion, and yet so readily: nor could it happen, that whereas so many Priests, good and bad, are promiscuously employed in hearing Confessions, even those should keep them secret, who keep nothing else; unless God, who instituted this Sacrament, protected by a special grace so salutary an institution. I am persuaded, therefore, whatever Luther may say, that Confession comes not from any popular custom or institution of the Fathers, but owes its establishment and preservation to God himself." Thus wrote our royal "Defender of the Faith" against the patriarch of the Reformation.

From Confession, Mr. White, after a sentence or two about the unscriptural encroachments of Romanists, passes on to the subject of Relics and Images. He thus questions his reader:—"Did you ever find mention of Relics in the Bible?" The reader is made to answer—"Certainly not." We suppose, then, that the obsequious reader never looked into the Fourth, or, as it is called in the Protestant Translation, the Second Book of Kings ch. xiii, v. 21, where it is mentioned that a dead body was raised to life by having touched the bones of the Prophet Elishus, or Elisha: and that he never saw, in the second chapter of the same Book, that the same Prophet had used a Relic, namely, the cloak of Elias or Elijah, to divide the waters of the Jordan. He never read, we presume,

the 19th chapter of the Acts, where it is stated that diseases and wicked spirits were driven out by the application of handkerchiefs and aprons from the body of St. Paul. Who can say, with these passages before him, that the Bible never mentions Relics?

Mr. White next amuses his reader with assuring him that Rome has long "carried on a trade in bones," and recounting numerous abuses and impositions, with false relics, &c. &c.; as also with various Images, Pictures, and the like, which he winds up with this sweeping conclusion:—"This I can assure you, before the whole world, that whoever submits entirely to the guidance of Rome, must become a weak superstitious being, unless this natural temper should dispose him to join with superstition the violence and persecuting spirit of the bitterest bigotry."

We shall not trouble our selves to examine the truth or falsehood of Mr. White's pretty stories; but we must say, that the gross and multiplied misrepresentations in which he has been already detected, give a strong presumption against his accuracy in such reports as these. If all the abuses exist which he enumerates, and if many more exist, they are still abuses; and till it can be shewn that our Church gives countenance to them, they will make nothing against the veneration of Relics and Images, properly understood and practised. If Mr. White means to assert that Relics are not to be had in a proper degree of veneration, the evidence of Scripture, of all tradition and the Holy Fathers, is against him; and St. Jerome will condemn him in the remarkable language he used against Vigilantius: "The Pope then does wrong when he offers sacrifice to the Lord over what we account the venerable bones, but what ye call the vile dust of the dead men, Peter and Paul, and considers their tombs as the Altars of Christ?—Oh impious assertion, to be denounced to the ends of the earth!" The Pastors of the Catholic Church have always watched with the greatest care to prevent and correct every kind of abuse in the veneration of relics and holy Images. The use of them is not of obligation upon any Catholic; yet we are unsparingly reproached, as if we placed our hopes of salvation in the possession of them. We cannot better conclude than in the feeling language of the pious and learned Dr. Milner on this subject—

It is a point agreed upon among Catholic Doctors and Divines; that the memorials of Religion form no essential part of it. Hence, if you should become a Catholic, as I pray God you may, I shall never ask you, if you have a pious picture or relic, or so much as a crucifix in your possession; but then, I trust, after the declarations I have made, that you will not account me an idolater, should you see such things in my Oratory or Study; or should you observe how tenacious I am of any crucifix in particular. Your faith and devotion may not stand in need of such memorials; but mine, alas! do. I am too apt to forget what my Saviour has done and suffered for me; but the sight of his representation often brings this to my memory, and affects my sentiments. Hence, I would rather part with most of the books in my library, than with the figure of my crucified Lord."—*End of Religious Controversy, Letter 34.*

To be Continued.

ORIGINAL.

ON OUR SAVIOUR'S PASSION AND DEATH.

[Extracted from a MS. poem on Charity.]

With pray'r in solitude he next prepares  
For his last mortal conflict; ev'n to death  
Himself devoting; guiltless for our guilt:  
Our ransom's willing victim, doom'd to bleed

Behold him stretch'd in agony severe  
Of mortal anguish; now preclusive felt

To his great suffering tragedy display'd:  
With all our crimes his innocence oppress'd.—*Lerit 16 22*  
That loath'd the load it bore: till from him forc'd,  
His sweat of blood the ground had all imbrui'd:  
And pitying angels stay'd their sinking Lord;  
As from its task his human nature frail  
Shrank shudd'ring back, and felt unwo't dismay.

Next see him by his faithless bosom friend  
With treach'rous kiss betray'd, and now by all  
His frighten'd followers left, the butt expos'd  
To unrelenting hate, and hostile scorn

In Idiot's guise, was wisdom's self array'd  
By man derisive I sore his sacred sides  
Smarted beneath the ruffian's scourge applied;  
And emblems mock of Majesty were giv'n  
To him, great Nature's universal Lord.  
The purple, round his naked shoulders hung:  
The red his sceptre; and the thorny crown,  
With prickly wreath his bleeding brows that bound  
And, more insulting, ev'n with him compar'd—*Psalms 21, 7*  
The worst of felons, ready pref'rence found.  
Then to the fatal Mount, as Isaac erst,  
Bearing the wood of his own sacrifice—*Gents. 22, 6*  
He journey'd onwards, nor himself refus'd  
A ready victim at his Father's call.—*Hebr. 10, 9.*

Pierc'd were his limbs, and pinion'd to the tree—*Is 49, 39.*  
The fruit of which forbid'n had mortal prov'd.—*Zac 12, 10*  
Now fruit that yields divine; death's antidote {*Prov 11, 31*  
Sov'reign prescrib'd mid all the guilty doom'd }*John 6 50-1-2*  
Sole guiltless he, the criminal chief appears. {*Is. 53, 12.*  
Where on his mercy's throne, 'twixt heav'n and earth Mark S.  
Conspicuous rais'd; and thirsting for our weal,—*Johr 19, 29.*  
Loath'd sorrow's cup ev'n to the dregs he drain'd  
Sparing us, also reserv'd, the bitter draught.

Next for his murd'ers earnest he implores—*Luke 23, 34*  
Forgiveness; pleading mock their crimes excuse.—  
When, loud proclaim'd our ransom's full discharge,—*John 19*  
Like faded flow'r, that bends beneath the blast, [30.  
With all her blushing honours round her strewd,  
He drops recumbent on his peaceful breast  
His holy head, resign'd; and calm expires.

Yet did not Nature calm th' event behold:—*Luke 23, 44-5.*  
She shook throughout, in all her vasty frame  
With horror pail'd, while th' affrighted sun  
Torn'd from the sight: and darkness interpos'd,  
In deepest gloom the Deicide that veil'd.

The Catholic

Will be published weekly at the Office of the Patriot and Farmer's Monitor, Kingston, Upper Canada, and issued on Friday. Terms—\$2 per annum, (exclusive of postage, which is four shillings a year) payable in advance.

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