

The True Witness

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JAN. 13, 1860.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

In the absence of more stirring events, public attention has been directed to an ominous pamphlet entitled "THE POPE AND THE CONGRESS" which has just appeared in Paris, and which is, professing, from the pen of M. de La Guernoniere; and the reputed writer of another notorious pamphlet which, under the title of "NAPOLEON III. ET L'ITALIE," heralded the war which soon after broke out between France and Austria.

That solution, of which the Times approves, is simple enough; its merit consists in short in a revision of the treaties of 1815, and the spoliation of the Pope. The latter is to be robbed of his territories with the exception of the City of Rome; which, until it shall please the high contracting parties to ordain otherwise, shall remain under the authority of the Pope, as an independent Sovereign.

In the meantime, whilst his avowed enemies are conspiring against him, and his treacherous friends are deserting him, the Sovereign Pontiff, resigned to the will of God, retains his health and spirits, and seems prepared to meet with dignity and fortitude whatever may be in store for him.

A terrible calamity is announced as having occurred in the Pemberton Mills, Laurence Mass., on the 10th inst. About 5 p.m. as some 800 persons were at work, the building—which seems to have been radically defective—gave way, burying hundreds in the ruins.

THE POPE AND THE "GAZETTE."—We find in the Montreal Gazette the following paragraph, which, as throwing some light upon the difficulties with which the Pontifical Government has to contend, and as illustrative of the spirit in which, too often, Protestants treat these difficulties and their origin, we transfer to our columns:

"DEBT OF THE ROMAN STATES.—The capital which Rome owes, and which its subjects are destined to pay, amounts at present to very nearly four hundred and sixty millions of francs. If you divide this by the number of the population, you will see that every baby born in the States inherits a debt of a hundred and thirteen francs for the parental blessings that have been rained upon himself and his ancestors."

This burden upon its finances would suffice to account for any defects which may exist in the administration of the temporal dominions of the Pope; but cannot be urged against his Government as an argument for its suppression, unless it can be shown that it has been caused by him or his predecessors in the free exercise of their functions; that the debt of four hundred and sixty millions had been contracted to delay the extravagant living of the Pope; and that the money had been dishonorably or unwisely expended.

Not on the revolted subjects of the Pope; unless the Gazette can show that the subject has the right to rise in armed insurrection whenever he pleases, against his legitimate ruler, and to transfer his allegiance to another. If the Gazette claims this right for the insurgents of the Romagna, he must, if he has the faintest pretensions to consistency, accord it to the people of Ireland.

We refer the Gazette to the history of the modern Heliogabalus, George the Magnificent, when Prince of Wales.

power of the Popes, reveals the design, of those who seek to supplant it. That design, evidently is, "repudiation," and the declaration of national bankruptcy—for otherwise what would be gained, in a pecuniary point of view, by secularisation?—or how otherwise would the substitution of the rule of Mazzini, for that of Pius IX., tend to relieve the Roman States from their pecuniary embarrassments? To apply the sponge to the National Debt is the avowed aim of the Chartists and ultra-revolutionists at home, and is the scarcely disguised object of the Liberals of Italy.

We do not of course vouch for the accuracy of the financial statement which we have clipped from the Gazette—but the following facts defy contradiction. First, that the indebtedness of the Roman States, whatever it may amount to, is not the consequence, direct or indirect, of the independent temporal power of the Popes—but is the direct consequence of the robberies, and brute violence under which the Papal dominions have suffered from the hands of the enemies of the Papacy; and secondly, that of no country in the world is the government so economically conducted as is that of Pius IX.

Whilst upon this subject we may remark that by the tone of his last article on the temporal power of the Popes, it would appear as if the Gazette had tacitly abandoned the charge against the late Mandement of His Lordship of Tloa; to the effect that Catholics were therein enjoined to pray for the perpetuation of a tyranny, and that God would be pleased to take despotism under his special protection.

"Queen Victoria is the head of the English Church. She possesses certain ecclesiastical functions, yet it were heretical in her sincere Roman Catholic subjects to pray for their continuance and extension; it were most unjust for the temporal authorities in Canada to order them to offer up such prayers."

Certainly it would be most unjust; for as all injustice implies the exercise of usurped authority, and as the "temporal authorities in Canada," in that they are "temporal," are not spiritual—so the assumption by them, for any purpose whatsoever, of any authority in the spiritual order, would be most "unjust" towards those over whom it was assumed.

Here there seems to us to be a strange confusion in the ideas of our cotemporary. The terms, "wrong and unjust" imply, or necessarily presuppose, some person or persons, who is or are the subject or subjects of wrong or injustice.

"On the other hand we hold it wrong and unjust for the spiritual authorities of the Romish Church to ask prayers for the perpetuation of the temporal authority of the Monarch of Rome, otherwise than as a general prayer for blessing and enlightenment on all Christian princes. We cannot but regard it with the same aversion or suspicion as our cotemporary would do ordered or enforced prayers of Roman Catholics for the ecclesiastical sway of the Queen."

Not the Protestants of the British Empire assuredly, for it is not so much as pretended by the Gazette that they have any interest in the matter, either one way or the other. On whom then has wrong or injustice been done by the Bishop's Mandement?

As the above is a fair average specimen of the argument which intelligent Protestants urge against Romanism, and to whose force are owing the triumphs of French Canadian Missionary Societies, and other "Swaddling" organisations, we trust that our readers will pardon us, if we honor it with a notice which certainly its intrinsic merits do not deserve. For it is evident that he who employs it, is not only grossly ignorant of the meaning of the words which he uses, but entertains most erroneous and anti-Christian notions with regard to a future life, and the actual condition of the Saints living—not dead—and reigning with Christ.

whatsoever, the abuses of which his subjects may have cause to complain, there is not in his dominions an abuse so flagrant, so monstrous as the Irish Church Establishment—an abuse, which by the acknowledgment of Protestants themselves, is without a parallel in the civilised world.

We care not which horn of the dilemma the Gazette accepts. If he asserts the duty of loyalty towards the legitimate sovereign—i.e., the sovereign de facto et de jure, and denies the right of armed rebellion in the case of the Irish, who have, in the Irish Church Establishment imposed on them by, good cause for complaint against, the British Government, he must assert the same duty as towards the insurgents of the Romagna, who have not cited any case of intolerable cruelty as justifying their rebellion against their legitimate sovereign; and if the latter, have not the right to rebel, then, even in intention, no wrong, no injustice, is done them by our prayers, that their rebellion may not be successful.

No. The Gazette dare not sustain the thesis, that the subject has the right to take up arms against his legitimate sovereign, and at pleasure to transfer his allegiance to another; for by so doing he would be proclaiming anarchy, and sounding the knell of order and society. Yet if he dare not maintain that thesis, then he cannot pretend that our prayers for the restoration of the temporal authority of the Pope over his revolted subjects inflict any wrong upon the latter:—for all wrong implies a right violated.

Upon whom then has wrong, upon whom has injustice been inflicted by the Bishop's Mandement enjoining us to pray for the restoration of the Pope's temporal authority? Not upon Catholics so ordered to pray; for the Bishop has the right, in virtue of his office, to enjoin such prayers, and we, Catholics, object not to the exercise of that right.

To conclude—we ask again, did our Bishops wrong any one by enjoining prayers for the success of Her Majesty's arms in India during the late rebellion? And had not the insurgents of Oude as good cause of complaint against the British Government, as have the Papal insurgents against the temporal power of the Pope? We pause for a reply.

THE "MONTREAL WITNESS" ON IDOLATRY.

"T'were a good deed to present the editor of the Montreal Witness with an English dictionary; so might he learn the meaning of words, and so be spared from falling into the absurdities contained in the subjoined paragraph—wherein the evangelical man again attempts to show that to ask the prayers of the Saints is to give to creature that which belongs exclusively to Creator. Replying to the True Witness of the 30th ult., upon the same subject, the Witness of the 4th instant, comments as follows:—

"With respect to the invocation of Saints, of whom the Virgin is avowed to be the chief, the above argument will show that there is no parallel between asking the prayers of a living Saint and those of a departed one. What would be thought of the Roman Catholic in Montreal, who should pray most earnestly before an image of the now living Pope—

"O holy father! pray for me."

"Would he not be told, 'you must go to Pope, or write to him, to let him know what you want.' But in the case of a dead Saint, how is he either to go or write? Either the dead Saints must be omnipresent and omniscient, to hear and know all the invocations which are addressed them, in which case they are invested with the attributes of Deity, and our respondent's own conditions of idolatry are fulfilled, or God must, in some way, convey the invocations to the said Saints, in order that they may be again presented back to himself—a supposition which seems puerile and absurd when the prayer might at once be addressed to God."—The Italics are our own.

As the above is a fair average specimen of the argument which intelligent Protestants urge against Romanism, and to whose force are owing the triumphs of French Canadian Missionary Societies, and other "Swaddling" organisations, we trust that our readers will pardon us, if we honor it with a notice which certainly its intrinsic merits do not deserve. For it is evident that he who employs it, is not only grossly ignorant of the meaning of the words which he uses, but entertains most erroneous and anti-Christian notions with regard to a future life, and the actual condition of the Saints living—not dead—and reigning with Christ.

Thus the comparison which he institutes between the act of invoking the prayers of a Saint in heaven, clothed with immortality, and therefore no longer subject to the infirmities of mortality—and the invoking the prayers of a Pope whilst cumbered with a mortal body and subject to all its infirmities—shows that the writer entertains very vague, and essentially false notions as to the condition of the blessed in a future life. They are—if our Lord Himself may be believed—as are the angels in heaven; on them the same material or physical laws to which mortals are subject, and by which they are limited, are no longer binding, for they are no longer in bondage to the senses; and therefore, whilst it would be absurd to pray before an image of the present

Pope, invoking his prayers with God—there is no such absurdity involved in the idea of invoking the prayers of one who is as are the angels in heaven; and who, in that he is now clothed with immortality, is no longer subject to the physical restrictions by which mortals are limited.—The Witness is in fact guilty of precisely the same error as that wherewith Our Lord reproached the Sadducees "who say there is no resurrection;" and who in their anxiety to convince Christ of error absurdly assumed that the conditions of immortality and mortality were necessarily the same, and that the same laws obtained under both. We reply therefore as replied Our Lord of old to the Sadducees—"You err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God," St. Matt. xxii, 29; for the Saints living and reigning with Christ are as the angels in heaven, and are no longer bound by the same material or physical laws, as those to which we mortals are subject, and which limit the range of our faculties.

And this brings us to another error of which in common with most evangelical Protestants, the Witness is constantly guilty. He always speaks of the Saints as if they were "dead," whilst in the eyes of the Catholic they are not "dead," but really and truly "living;" incorruptible and immortal. To the Papist, the day whereon the Saints put off this mortal to put on immortality, was the day, not of their death, but of their birth—the day, not when they ceased to exist, but that on which they first really commenced to live.—So the Church celebrates the anniversaries of the martyrdom of her beatified children as their birthdays; and so the Saints whom we Papists honour and invoke are not "dead Saints," but living the life of the angels of God in heaven. If the latter are not dead, so neither are the former.

But then, argues the Witness, these "dead Saints"—that is to say, these Saints living and reigning with Christ, and therefore no longer subject to the laws or conditions of time and space to which we mortals are subject, and by which we are limited—must either be "omnipresent" or "omniscient" to hear and know all the requests that are made for the assistance of their prayers; in other words, in order to know what takes place amongst the faithful on earth—this, in a material point of view, infinitesimal speck in God's universe—the Saints must know every thing that occurs, has occurred, and will occur, throughout creation; and if in their glorified immortality we attribute to the Saints a capacity of intelligence a little higher and more extended than that which they enjoyed on earth, and whilst cumbered with corruptible bodies, we assign to them the attributes of Deity! It is impossible to reply seriously to such stuff; it is to the Catholic almost intellectually degrading to have to deal with such an opponent as our evangelical friend of the Witness.

We can only recommend him to purchase, or borrow, an English dictionary, and therein to look for the meaning of the words "idolatry, omniscience, omnipresence," before he employs them in controversy. Perhaps by a diligent use of the said work, and a careful meditation upon the face of the heavens, he may in time arrive at the conclusion that they who are as the angels before the Throne of God, may know everything that takes place on earth—(though even this trifle we do not attribute to the Saints)—without being either "omniscient" or "omnipresent." There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth upon earth; and we conclude therefore that, by some process to us unknown, the inhabitants of heaven are aware of, and are not indifferent to, some of the events that transpire upon this little globe; and in this belief we rest, without fear of attributing to creature any of the peculiar "attributes of Deity."

If one horn of the dilemma upon which the Witness seeks to impale us, affords us conclusive proof of the writer's ignorance—the other is strongly suggestive of his arrogance and presumption—qualities often found in company with ignorance, and stupidity. That it is not by any independent power of their own, that the Saints are cognisant of what transpires upon earth; and that any knowledge thereof which they may possess must in consequence be "in some way" conveyed or communicated to them by God Himself, we of course may admit; for He is the source of all their joy, in Him they see all things, and the Lamb is the light of their eyes. But though we may admit this, and though we recognise that it is from God alone, that His Saints can have the privilege of knowing something of what transpires upon earth, we deny that there is anything more "puerile" in the supposition that that we on earth are assisted by their prayers in heaven—seeing that it is "in some way" through God that the knowledge of our invocation of their prayers is conveyed to the Saints—than there is in the idea of prayer itself, offered to an all-wise and unchangeable Being. There is we admit, a mystery that we cannot fathom in the hypothesis suggested by the Witness; but there is nothing "puerile," for the self-same mystery attaches to the very idea of prayer, which by natural reason trespassing upon the domain of the supernatural, may be shown to be useless, puerile, derogatory to the dignity of God, and inconsistent with the very idea of an all-perfect and therefore unchangeable Being, in Whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning. How such a God can be propitiated by prayer it is impossible for the human intellect, unenlightened by Grace to conceive; how man can be benefited by prayer addressed to such a Being it is utterly impossible for natural reason to show; and yet by faith we know that "the continual prayer of a just man availeth much." How it is so, we cannot tell; for God is not as man that He can change, neither can we conceive how He Whom we believe to be immovable, can be moved by our prayers or entreaties. Reason on the one hand, or rather our limited faculties to which we give the name of reason—asserts the absurdity and puerility of prayer or supplication addressed to an impassible, immovable God; whilst faith, and an intuition above reason, teach us that prayer is not only useful, but absolutely necessary to creature. Prayer, in short, is the one great mystery of all religion which no human intelligence has fathomed or can fathom;

and it in obedience to the dictates of our limited intelligence we were to accept the vague theories of the Witness, we should on the self same principle logically carried out, reject altogether the duty of prayer; as not only useless, but as actually insulting to God; because implying the possibility of change on the part of Him to Whom our prayers were addressed. When the Witness shall have succeeded in proving the reasonableness of prayer to an unchangeable God, then shall we feel ourselves called upon to establish the reasonableness of our invocation of the Saints; and its perfect compatibility of with the hypothesis that "God must in some way convey the invocation to the said Saints, in order that they may be again presented back to Himself."

Abandoning hypothesis however, for the solid ground of history, let us see how God represents Himself to man; and whether He considers it "puerile" to accept prayers through one channel in preference to another.

We read for instance, in the Book of Job c. xlii., that the wrath of God was kindled against Eliphaz the Themanite and his two friends, and that the Lord referred them to His servant Job, that he should pray for them; for said the Lord, "his face I will accept." Now here the Lord is represented as acting in precisely the same manner as that which the Witness scouts as "puerile and absurd," when applied, not to Job, but to the Saints of the Christian dispensation. God refers Job's friends to Job, instead of accepting the prayers of the former at once and directly; and even in the hypothesis of the Witness there is nothing more "puerile" or "absurd" than this. Of how prayer acts, or wherein it serves him who prays, natural reason tells us nothing; and it is therefore most arrogant and presumptuous on the part of man, whose reason though sufficient in the natural order, is worthless in the supernatural, to prescribe bounds to Deity, or to sneer at as "puerile," the very process which God Himself—if the Old Testament may be believed—enjoined in the case of the friends of Job.

With respect to images and paintings, and the lawfulness of employing sensible signs addressed to the eyes, as well as sensible signs addressed to the ears, as the "means of stirring up men's minds to worship," the Witness remarks in reply to ours of the 30th ult., that God has commanded the one, and forbidden the other. This we deny. God prohibited the use of graven images to the Israelites as the objects of, but not as adjuncts to, worship, or as means of stirring up men's minds to worship. Nay! as in the case of the Cherubim and of the brazen serpent He expressly enjoined the use of sensible signs addressed to the eye as adjuncts to divine worship—thus showing that in their use there is nothing essentially evil or idolatrous. The ark, the tables of the Law, were such sensible signs; before them we read that the faithful of old bowed down; but we do not read that their cotemporaries were silly enough, or malicious enough, to tax them with idolatry for so doing.

The aversion of the Witness to the titles of honor applied by the Catholic Church to the Blessed Mother of God is natural, and only to be removed by divine grace. Yet would we contend that there is nothing absurd in applying to her through whom we received Christ in the flesh, and, therefore, access to the Kingdom of Heaven, the title of "Janua Celi." Not without deep meaning are we told in Holy Scripture given for our instruction, that, when the "wise men from the East" came to seek Jesus, "they found the Child with Mary his mother"—St. Matt. ii. 2. As with the wise men of old, so with all of us to day. When we find the "Saviour, who is Christ the Lord," we find Him as the shepherds found Him, with "Mary and Joseph"—as the Gentiles represented by the "wise men" found Him, "with Mary his Mother." When the Witness shall have grasped the sublime mystery of the Incarnation, then he will understand the meaning of the Catholic's devotion to her who was found with child of the Holy Ghost; then will he perceive how feeble, how inadequate all human language is, and must be, to describe the glories of that Virgin Mother who in her womb bore Him who was even then as truly God, as He is now when seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. At the contemplation of this great mystery, but fundamental dogma of Christianity, the brain grows dizzy; for eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive such a union as that which existed between Mary and her Creator; and though with faltering lips we may strive to sing her praise, we feel that it is impossible for us, whilst in this mortal state, to do justice to our theme. The Socinian who denies that the Christ the Son of Mary was God, and the Nestorian, who dissolves Christ into two distinct persons, may consistently object to the Papist's warmth of devotion to the Blessed Mother; but such objections fall with bad grace from the lips of one who professes to hold the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation—i.e., the hypostatic union of God and man in the Son of Mary.

THE DIFFERENCE.—The difference between the TRUE WITNESS and its Catholic cotemporaries of Toronto is fully explained in the subjoined extract, which we make from the Mirror of the 30th ult. :—

"This Province of Upper Canada cannot be ruled by Protestant, Presbyterian, or Catholic simply. It is vain for the violent ones of any section to hope for it, and if it could be so it might be unfortunate. They must unite, and, in uniting, sacrifice to some extent what they consider principles of consequence, but what the outward world and civilisation may cure very little about." The Italics are our own.

This is just it. Our cotemporaries contend that Catholics must unite with some party, tho' it is impossible for them to do so without sacrificing "to some extent what they consider principles of consequence," since without such union, and sacrifice of principles, they "could not command sufficient influence to obtain for the starving laborer employment even as a scavenger." We, on the other hand, contend that nothing can justify, or palliate the vileness of him who for any conceivable motive, consents to sacrifice, or hold in abeyance, what he considers a