

General Intelligence.

(From the U. S. Catholic Magazine.)

CATHOLIC VIEWS OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

- 1.—*The Written Word and the Living Witness ; or the Bible Question fairly tested.* New-York: Casserly & Sons. 18mo.
- 2.—*Traite de la lecture Chretienne, par Dom Jamin.* Paris: Victor Lagier. 12mo.

Of all the books that have ever fallen into the hands of men, the sacred volume possesses the highest claims to our veneration. The very title that is given to the collection of inspired Scriptures—the word Bible—shows it to have been considered by the early church as the book of books, and holding the rank of pre-eminence among all the writings known to mankind. It is the great record that has transmitted to us the wonders of the creation, the origin and fall of the first man, the promises of a Redeemer, and all the dispensations by which divine Providence prepared the world for the coming of the expected Messiah. There, too, do we find the history of the establishment of the Christian religion, embracing the life and ministry of its heavenly Founder, the labors of the apostles, and the astonishing success which followed their announcement of the words of life. In short, it is an exposition of what the Almighty has done for man, of the sublime truths which he has been pleased to reveal to us, and of the laws which he has established for the regulation of our course through life to the realms of everlasting happiness. The various portions of which the sacred volume is composed have indeed been written by men, but men who wrote under the special guidance of a heavenly inspiration, and whose words are therefore oracles of God, and entitled to the profoundest respect and the most unqualified obedience.

Such being the divine and authoritative character of the holy Scriptures, and their important bearing upon the happiness of men in this and in a future state of existence, it would seem almost paradoxical that they should become an occasion of error and of ruin, at least it is certain, considering the momentous objects for which they have been confided to us, that no Christian should ever be unprepared to say, with the prophet, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths." But how different is the state of things which we witness around us! The gospel of peace has become the ground of dissension, and of the bitterest hostility among Christian sects! The

channels of divine truth have been made the vehicles of the most dangerous and deplorable errors! The fountains of life have been converted into sources of a spiritual death! For the last three hundred years has the strange spectacle been presented to the world, of men clamoring loudly in favor of the sacred writings, and at the same time pretending to derive from the inspired word the most contradictory opinions. The abuse of the oracles of truth is still witnessed to an alarming extent, and what is more, the word of God is not unfrequently made the pretext for the most antipathetic feelings, and a plea for the commission of the most violent excesses; as if the gospel of Christ, the basis and essence of which is charity, could be a justification of sentiments and actions which tend to the subversion of social order and the fostering of the worst passions of the human heart.

In a country like ours, where reason, intelligence, and education have so dominant an influence, and where the people are generally disposed to give to important questions the consideration which they demand, there is good ground for the belief that more accurate views will gradually obtain in reference to the objects and use of the inspired volume. There are thousands amongst our Protestant brethren who are prepared to examine the subject dispassionately, and to adopt those sentiments which are conformable to the dictates of sound reason. To these, on the one hand, we address the following remarks, confident that they will applaud the wisdom of the Catholic church in the course which she has invariably pursued in relation to the word of God. On the other hand, it may not be a useless task to refresh the memory of our Catholic readers on a point which frequently calls for explanation at their hands, and which has also an intimate connexion with the advantages which they themselves may derive from the use of the inspired volume.—The works which we have placed at the head of this paper, are both very excellent for the sound and practical views which they contain on the use of the sacred writings. The first mentioned consists of three articles which have for their object, to exhibit more particularly the doctrinal application of the Bible, the necessity of an unerring and living interpreter to expound its mysteries, and the fatal illustration of its indiscriminate use without regard to the teachings of the church, as shown in the countless sects which have sprung from the Protestant principle. The second is a treatise on Christian reading, and though the greater portion of the work bears no immediate reference to the Scriptures, the author has a long chapter on the superiority that should be attached to the sacred volume over other books, as a source of spiritual