



THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE.

AN INTERESTING INTERVIEW. Has She Forbidden Its Use?

Special to The Catholic News, Preston, Eng.

We referred recently to certain statements appearing in "Pearson's Magazine" in regard to the printing and circulation of the Bible by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

In order that we might clear up some of the points contained in the article a representative of this journal called at the office of the Society which is situated in a palatial building in Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C.

Our representative inquired for the Rev. Dr. Wright, who is connected with the translation department of the Society, and who was interviewed on behalf of "Pearson's Magazine" for the article referred to. Dr. Wright was busy at the moment, but after a little delay he made his appearance, and our representative at once stated the object of his call.

"I called upon you, Dr. Wright," he said "in order to see whether you agreed with the various statements that are contained in this article in regard to the Catholic Church and the Bible, and whether they are published under your authority, or whether they are the work of the interviewer himself?"

"In the first place, I would like to know whether you accept the view that the Bible was not published in the vernacular until the time of Martin Luther?"

"Oh, by no means," replied Dr. Wright. "There were a very large number of translations of the Scripture in various languages before Luther's time, and in fact, I could take you upstairs and show you some of them here. Many of them were produced beautifully, and were real works of art."

"Then," said the interviewer, "you agree that not only did the Church not prohibit the issue of the Scriptures in the vernacular, but that many of the greatest saints of the Church devoted their time to the circulation and issue of the sacred volume?"

"Yes," he said, "that is quite true; but I do not agree that the Catholic Church favours the reading of the Bible by the people."

"Now, now, Dr. Wright," said our interviewer, "did not His Holiness the Pope recently issue an Encyclical Letter recommending the study and the reading of the Scriptures by the people?"

"Oh," said Dr. Wright, "if you read the Encyclical you will see that it by no means recommends the people to read the Scriptures. They are only to be read by the learned."

"But," our interviewer objected, "does not the Encyclical Letter expressly recommend the reading of the Scriptures by the faithful?"

"I have no doubt that it is intended to be read in that light, but it is not the real meaning of it."

"Oh, then you ask me to believe that the Pope issued an Encyclical Letter which was really meant to deceive the public, and not to bear the interpretation which has been put upon it?"

"Yes," replied Dr. Wright. "I would go so far as to say that it was not an honest letter!"

"Just so, Dr. Wright. Well we will leave that part of it in which you attribute unworthy motives

and false intentions to his Holiness although on the face of it the Encyclical distinctly advises the people to read the Scriptures. I will ask you something else."

"Do you agree that there is such a thing as corrupt versions of the Scripture?"

"No no," said Dr. Wright, "I don't believe anything of the kind. I don't believe the Catholic Church at any time has corrupted the Scriptures, or, indeed, that any religious body has done anything of the kind at any time. They have made mistakes, but so far as these mistakes are concerned they really do not matter to man's salvation!"

"Now, let us see," said the interviewer, "what this amounts to. You say mistakes have been made, but these mistakes really do not matter, and are of no consequence?"

"Exactly," said Dr. Wright, "that is my view."

"Well, but," objected our representative, "there exists in St. Paul's Churchyard a Bible Society which announces as the object of its existence the circulation of uncorrupted versions of the word of God, so that it is quite clear that some Protestants do believe that there are such things as corrupt versions of the Scriptures."

"Oh," was Dr. Wright's answer, "that is only the Trinitarian Bible Society; that really does not matter."

"But we Catholics also believe that there are corrupt versions of the Scripture, and we say that just as the Bank of England is quite right to prosecute a man who forges a bank note and also to destroy spurious notes put into circulation, so also was it quite right to punish people who published corrupt versions of the Scripture and to destroy such corrupt versions."

"Oh," said Dr. Wright, "I see, and you do really admit, then, that the Catholic Church did burn the Scriptures?"

"Oh, yes," said the interviewer. "Not only do Catholics agree that the Church did so order, but Catholics say that the Catholic Church would not have been doing what she has been divinely appointed to do if she had neglected to point out to the faithful that such corrupt versions were in existence, and to guard against them, and also to destroy them when such a course was possible."

"Oh, I see, I see," said Dr. Wright; "but my contention is that the mistakes that have been made in translation do not really matter so far as the man's salvation is concerned, if he will use his intelligence and follow the Word of God."

"Yes," said the interviewer; "but when you see men equally honest and equally earnest and equally intelligent taking exactly contrary meanings from the same text, who then is to decide? Surely it is necessary to preserve the truth in its entirety."

"Oh, yes," agreed Dr. Wright, "that is so."

"Well, then, surely the slightest deviation from the truth ought to be carefully guarded against, and surely it cannot be that people taking exactly opposite meanings from the same text are equally right in their interpretation?"

"My reply is," said Dr. Wright, "that the Scriptures without note or comment placed in the hands of the people will guide them aright."

"Just so. Very well, then," was the reply, "we will leave

that point where it is and deal with the charge of preventing people from reading the Scriptures!"

At this juncture the interviewer and the rev. gentleman discovered that they were both Irishmen, hailing from the black North, and after an interchange of opinions on the controversies that occur in Ulster on religious matters the discussion was resumed.

"I can tell, as a Catholic and as a boy brought up in Ireland, that before I was 12 years of age," said the interviewer, "I had read the Bible—Old and New Testament—more than once or twice to my parents and the rest of the family, and I had never heard any objection to reading of the Scriptures from any Catholic priest at any period of my life, either in Ireland or elsewhere."

"Oh now," said Dr. Wright, "you know very well, you know, that your Church does object to the reading of the Scriptures, and I saw a paragraph in a Catholic paper the other week to that effect."

"I am satisfied," said the interviewer, "it is useless to pursue that point, seeing that you refuse to accept my experience on the matter, but I would merely ask you what authority you think should be acted upon to decide when people take different meanings from the same text. For instance, you know very well that Catholics hold the doctrine of the Real Presence, basing their belief upon the words of Christ, in which He says: 'This is My body,' and upon other equally plain texts?"

"You do not mean to tell me," said Dr. Wright, "that you believe that bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ?"

"That is Catholic belief," said the interviewer, "and you will find it set forth in the Penny Catechism, which is in the hands of every Catholic child."

"Well," said the rev. gentleman, "you are the first Catholic, except a cleric, I have ever met who really believes that!"

"If that is so," said the interviewer, "it seems to me you have had very little acquaintance amongst the Catholics; for at this what every Catholic believes."

"But now," the Doctor said, "what is your real belief on the matter; because I also believe in the Real Presence, even far more than you do?"

"Catholic belief is that the substance of the bread and wine is changed by the words of consecration into the Body and Blood of Christ."

The rev. gentleman shook his head.

"It is extraordinary what the human mind will believe!"

"Exactly," was the answer; "but we Catholics would say it is extraordinary what the human mind will refuse to believe in the face of very clear evidence."

"But," said Dr. Wright, becoming really the interviewer, "what if the bread and wine are not consumed? Suppose it is thrown away, suppose the wafer is trampled underfoot, suppose it is thrown to a dog?"

"How on earth can that affect the matter? Do you believe that Christ Himself when on earth was badly treated, that men spat in His face, and that wicked hands crucified Him? And if in His human form He was subjected to such indignities, how can it possibly affect His Real Presence if, while under

the appearance of Bread and Wine, instead of under the appearance of a man, He is subjected to indignities?"

"You Catholics are wonderful people," said Dr. Wright; "the way you obfuscate yourselves is quite remarkable. And you are now really trying to make people believe that the Church does permit people to read the Scriptures?"

Much more followed in the way of desultory conversation, but without any tangible result, and here we must leave "Pearson's Magazine," the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the Rev. Dr. Wright with this final query: "It is stated in the article that not until the lapse of 400 years did the Scriptures really appear," and naturally our interviewer thought it rather to the point to ask Dr. Wright what was done during these 400 years when there were really no Scriptures and no Bible Society. This, however, was more than Dr. Wright felt inclined to answer, and our representative bade him "Good-bye."

Gentile Scriptures.

N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

Prof. Max Mueller has requested the Holy Father's acceptance of a copy of his great work, "The Sacred Books of the East." When Mr. Morris Moore made Prof. Mueller's intention known to Cardinal Rampolla he was assured that His Holiness would be very pleased to give the book a place in the Vatican library. The work consists of forty-nine volumes, and is the result of Max Mueller's labors in collecting together the liturgical books used by the followers of Buddha and Confucius. It is a valuable addition to the literature that tells of the wanderings of the human mind in reference to religion and to the origin and end of things. Gentilism is not, as some suppose, a point in the progress of man from no religion to religion in its highest development. It is, on the contrary, a point or step in the retrogression of man from revealed religion to naturalism, from the true worship of God to the worship of the face from the Creator to the creature. The great Jesuit, Thébaud, in his work on Gentilism and Christianity has shown conclusively that the further we ascend in the history of the race and the literature of religion the purer we find man's belief and worship; and that the movement was not from polytheism to monotheism, but from monotheism to polytheism, from the worship of the one true God to the worship of many false gods. Judaism, therefore, was not so much a new revelation as a reaffirmation of the original revelation made to man in the beginning. The more ancient literature of the East, collected by Max Mueller, tends to confirm this truth, so clearly brought out by Father Thebaud. It is for the reason, and in this sense, St. Augustine said: "There is no religion that does not contain some grain of truth."

Error, pure and simple, cannot exist, just as form cannot exist without that which is formed, or shadow without light, or disease without a living organism whose normal state is health. Error, to exist, must have a truth in which to inhere. It cannot stand alone. Error is not in or of truth or of things, but in our misapprehension of

them; it is a false relation between the mind perceiving and the thing perceived. It is analogous to objects seen through distorted glasses. The objects are really seen, but not seen as they really are. So truth seen through a distorted medium is seen, but not seen as it is, or so as to be recognized. In this sense there is a truth at the bottom of every error, and the existence of error proves that there is a truth, a reality, somewhere back of it.

To recognize a false god, as the pagans did, proves that there is a true God, for without the true the false cannot be conceived. To recognize a counterfeit is to admit the existence of a genuine note somewhere. Deny the existence of the genuine note and the counterfeit ceases to be a counterfeit, because it ceases to falsely represent or misrepresent anything that is. It is of its essence to refer to the real, and its existence depends on its reference to the real. This reference or relation ceasing, it ceases to be a counterfeit. As the counterfeit implies the genuine, so the false implies the true, and error the truth. It is thus that the false religions and worship of paganism prove the existence of a true religion and worships. Without this true religion false religions are unthinkable.

The human race began with the true, revealed religion and worship, and it is this true religion, disfigured, distorted, obscured and remembered but in shreds and patches, that is found in the ancient literature of the cradle land of the race, in the Vedas of India and the Zends of Persia. Whatever of truth and morality there is—and there is much—in these books is the echo of the original revelation, faintly heard in the discord of error, but never lost. To attribute these truths and moral principles to the individual genius and wisdom of Gautama, Zoroaster or Confucius is to mistake their origin. These ancient Gentile writings are but palimpsests on which, through the later writing, can be discerned the greatly obscured original revelation of God to man.

In this view the researches of Max Mueller in ancient Gentile literature are interesting and useful. They prove that man began with belief in one true God, and in the course of time wandered from that primitive belief into error and idolatry. Proving this, they confirm the Mosaic record. But to seek those Gentile scriptures as containing a greater light on the origin of things and the duty and destiny of man than the Mosaic and Christian dispensations afford is to forsake the gushing fountain and seek pure water in the arid sand plains of Sahara.

His Remarkable Hen.

From the Philadelphia Press.

There is an original humorist intown—at least, there is a man whose humor is original. He was in a group of story tellers the other night, and when it came to his turn, he said:

"I've got a remarkable hen out on my farm. She seems to know that I like a real fresh egg for breakfast. One night when I retired I left my hat lying on the floor, where it had dropped. In the morning the hen came to my room and laid an egg in the hat. After that I left the hat on the floor on purpose, and every morning the hen came and deposited an egg. A few mornings ago there was a newspaper in my hat and the hen laid her egg on that. The egg, being warm and moist, received an imprint on the shell of a line from the paper, which read, 'This is the force of habit.'"