

JESUS said to his disciples Whom do you say that I am?

Simon Peter answered and said Thou art Christ the Son of the living God

And Jesus answering, said to him Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. AND I SAY TO THEE THAT THOU ART PETER, AND UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.

AND I SHALL GIVE TO THEE THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven. S. Matthew xvi. 15-19.



Was anything concealed from PETER, who was styled the Rock on which the Church was built, who received the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the power of loosing and binding in Heaven and on earth?"

—TERTULLIAN Proscrip. xvii
"There is one God, and one Church, and one Chair founded by the voice of the Lord upon PETER. That any other Altar be erected, or a new Priesthood established, besides that one Altar, and one Priesthood, is impossible. Whosoever gathers elsewhere, scatters. Whatever is devised by human frenzy, in violation of the Divine Ordinance, is adulterous, impious, sacrilegious"—St. Cyprian Ep. 13 ad plebem.

"All of them remaining silent, for the doctrine was beyond the reach of man, PETER the Prince of the Apostles and the supreme herald of the Church, not following his own inventions, nor persuaded by human reasoning, but enlightened by the Father, says to him: Thou art Christ, and not this alone, but the Son of the living God.—St. Cyril of Jerus. Cat. xi. 1.

Calendar.

- July 30—Sunday—VII after Pentecost and I August Commem of the Holy Roman Pontiffs Doub com &c.
- " 31—Monday—S. Ignatius of Loyola Con. Doub.
- Aug. 1—Tuesday—S. Peter's Chains G Doub com &c.
- " 2—Wednesday—S. Stephen I P M Doub Sup.
- " 3—Thursday—Finding of the Body of S. Stephen Semid.
- " 4—Friday—S. Donatus G Doub.
- " 5—Saturday—Dedication of B V M ad Nives G Doub.

BISHOP HUGHES' LETTERS

In reply to "Kirwan," alias the Rev. Nicholas Murray, D.D., of Elizabethtown, New Jersey

LETTER II.

DEAR SIR—

The merit of your letters, if they have any in the eyes of sincere Protestants, is in the supposed fact that you were brought up and instructed in the Catholic religion; and that your testimony is more trustworthy, on this account, than if you had been born and brought up a Protestant.

This is, in fact, the ground which you have taken.—You speak of yourself, of your knowledge and experience of the Catholic Religion, of your motives and reasons for renouncing it, from the beginning to the end of your letters. You are the witness in the cause, you are the hero of the romance; and it will be impossible for me to do justice to the review, without paying attention to the prominent personality, which you have established for yourself, in assigning the reasons of your conversion.

The first position which I intend to establish, then, is that Ireland never produced a peasant more ignorant of the Catholic, or of the Protestant religion, than you were, when you renounced the creed of your fathers and became an infidel. For the proof of this position you shall be my witness. Turn to your first letter, and read your own words.

"I first became an infidel. Knowing nothing of religion but that which was taught me by parents and priests, and thinking that that was the sum of it, when that was rejected infidelity became my only alternative."—p. 11.

"On reaching the years of maturity my mind was a perfect blank as to all religious instruction."—p. 30.

"With my Missal I was somewhat familiar; I said the catechism when I was confirmed, at the age of nine or ten, and that was the amount of my religious education. At the age of eighteen years the catechism was forgotten, and the Missal was neglected, and my conscience was uneducated, and my mind unfurnished with religious principles, the only test of truth left me was my common sense."—p. 31.

This was precisely the ago at which you left the Church, and became an infidel. Your "mind was a perfect blank as to all religious instruction." In other words, you were perfectly ignorant of the religion which you were about to reject, and, if we can trust to your own words, this ignorance was the only reason going before and determining your conversion to infidelity.

The reader may suppose that in proclaiming your profound ignorance of religion, your meaning is, that you understood the Catholic religion, in which you were brought up, but were as yet

ignorant of the pure evangelical doctrines which you have since embraced. But this would be a mistake. Your meaning is, that you were entirely ignorant of the Catholic religion, as well as of all others. For this also we have your own testimony, in the following words:

"Some book or tract, now forgotten, gave rise to some inquiries as to the Mass. I asked, What does it mean? I could not tell, though for years a regular attendant upon it. Why does the priest dress so? What book does he read from, when carried now to his right, and now to his left? What mean those candles burning at noon-day? Why do I say prayers in Latin, which I understand not? Should I not know what I am saying when addressing my Maker? Why do I bow down and strike my breast, when the little bell rings? What does it all mean? The darkness of Egypt rested upon those questions."

Never did man forsake one religion and join another, who had contrived to be so profoundly ignorant of the forsaken creed, as you, Nicholas Murry, prove yourself to have been, in regard to Catholicity, when you renounced it, and became an infidel. Whatever you know of it now, true or false, you have learned as other Protestants do, outside of the Church and from her enemies.

It is imputed to our countrymen that they act first, and reflect afterwards. I am sorry, Sir, that your conduct, when you renounced the creed of your humble, but, I have no doubt, virtuous and respectable parents, goes so far to justify the imputation. It is certain, on your own testimony, that when you ceased to be a Catholic and became an infidel, the Catholic religion might be true, or might be false, for all you knew about it. It is equally certain that when, in 1817, you publish a series of smart, if not learned, reasons for your conduct thirty years ago, you have been again acting more *Hibernico*—and sorry am I that during so long a period, with the advantages of American and Presbyterian training, you have not yet out-grown the Irishman's national weakness. But, Sir, no unsophisticated Irishman would attempt to justify his act by reasons which in the order of time, occur to his mind many years after the act had been performed—as you have done. A genuine Irishman would consent to be laughed at, and would join in the laugh with right good humour, rather than attempt the trick of reversing the wheel of time, and assigning the reasons of 1817 as the motives of his conduct in 1820.

The chronology of the events which make up a case is oftentimes very important. Previous to your conversion you knew nothing of the Catholic—nothing of the Protestant—religion. The reasons assigned in your recent letters, may or may not be good reasons, but whether good or bad, they had nothing to do with your change of religion. You blundered out of the Church and into infidelity without knowing why or wherefore—and your reasons are all out of date. They might be styled with great propriety, "An Irishman's Motives for becoming a Protestant, arranged according to the order imputed to his countrymen, that of acting first, and reflecting afterwards."

You may blame your priests or your parents for the peculiar absence of religious knowledge which preceded your conversion. But the fact of your profound ignorance of all religion, at the period of your change, is the material point, and you have been candid enough to establish that point beyond all dispute.

You seem to be troubled with a peculiar weakness of memory—and this is a great misfortune

in a Christian man who writes for the edification of the public. After what we have just seen of your mental condition at the period of your apostasy from the Church, into what an awkward exhibition of yourself does this short memory betray you at the end of your first Letter, where you "profess to state in a series of Letters to my Right Reverence the reasons which induced you to leave the Roman Catholic Church, and which prevent you from returning to it."—(page 11.) Now, dear "Kirwan," we are told in Logic, that of two propositions which mutually contradict each other, one must be false. If your mind was "a perfect blank as to all religious instruction," as you assure us it was (page 30), how could you have "reasons that induced you to leave the Church?"—(page 11.) Have you forgotten in one page, what you had affirmed in the other? Now, however, that I have called your recollection to the mistake, pray, be serious, and tell the public which of these contradictory statements you would have it to believe. Why, Sir, your own great stand-by, "common sense," revolts at the insult of religious "reasons," offered from a mind which, as to religious instruction, is a "perfect blank."

Some persons may think that you are quizzing the public. I think not. Your memory appears to have been but poor from your childhood. And here allow me to pluck up a nettle which you would have planted on the graves of "your parents and priests." Thanks to their charitable efforts for your instruction in the Christian doctrine, you "knew your Catechism by heart, at the age of nine or ten years, when you were confirmed."—(page 31.) Now I would call this a good, almost an extraordinary memory in a child of ten years. It had received and retained the waters of Christian knowledge which overspread the pages of the entire Catechism which you knew by heart. This was no trifle. But the first subsequent evidence of its failure is the fact that you have forgotten to tell us of the sad catastrophe by which it became a cracked and leaky cistern immediately after confirmation; so that the "catechism itself was forgotten" when you arrived at the jumping-off age of eighteen years—(ibid.) Pray, might I ask, whether it was this, your precocious talent of forgetfulness which caused you, at that period, to be "even talked of as a candidate for Maynooth?"—(page 31.)

But after all, dear Sir, this memory of yours puzzles me amazingly. I turn to page 98, where having given me up, you address the Irish Catholic Laity in such tones of winning tenderness, that Blarney Castle never tipped the human tongue with sweeter. "Your present feelings as to your church, I have had in all their force. I can entirely appreciate them. I have cordially hated Protestantism and Protestants; and I have seen the time when I regarded the man as my personal enemy who would utter a word against my religion. But those were the days of my youth, and of my ignorance. When I became a man, I put away childish things."—(page 98.) Why, this is queer. You had forgotten at eighteen what the Church had taught you; and you remember at seven and forty, your hatred of Protestants which she never taught you at all! You remember that when you became a man, you "put away childish things" and "became also an infidel." Yet you forgot that you had told us before, that when you became a man, there were no "childish things" left to be put away—that they had already sloped from your memory—that at the early age of eighteen you had "forgotten them, and that, as

to religious instruction, your mind was a "perfect blank!"

It is not my business to reconcile these flat, palpable contradictions. I have established, from your own repeated avowal your utter and profound ignorance of the Catholic religion, when you left the Church, and became an infidel. You never returned, to finish, or rather to begin your Catholic education. Like one of the winged messengers let loose from the hand of the Patriarch, you found more congenial sustenance abroad, and you visited the Ark no more. In all of this you may have been sincere, and if you were, in nothing of this do I blame you. But I blame you for assuming a character which does not belong to you.

When a man changes his religion he ought to be serious and sincere. When he does it with that direct reference to his account at the bar of God's eternal judgment, which leaves no doubt as to the sincerity of his motive, then, as I said once before, I regard it as the grandest and most truly heroic act of which a rational being is capable on this earth. To assign the motives for such an act is equally fair and honorable. But, Sir, I can conceive of nothing more disgusting to an upright man to discover what is vulgarly, but very expressively called "humbbug" mixed up in the assignment of such motives. This foul admixture is what I charge upon your recent Letters, and blame.

The American public are generous, and credulous too, towards those who profess to write for their amusement or instruction. Being chiefly Protestants, little acquainted with the religion which you have forsaken and denounced, they would be, they have been particularly generous and credulous towards you. As an Irishman, it is unworthy of you to take unfair advantage of these noble sentiments.

It is true, that if they read your pages with a cold, impartial criticism, they would see nothing to put them on their guard. But your profound ignorance of the Catholic doctrine, when you became an infidel, which you assert and repeat, *usque ad nauseam*, they will construe, like yourself, as the reproach of your parents and priests. On the other hand, your introduction of yourself as one brought up in the "camp of the enemy," was obviously calculated, if not intended to deceive them. Here is your bow to the public. "I was baptized by a priest—I was confirmed by a bishop—I often went to confession—I have worn my amulets—and I have said my Pater Nosters and my Hail Marys, more times than I can now enumerate."—(page 10.)

Now, this announcement of your competency to treat the subject, is sufficiently brief, and sufficiently stupid.—Barring the "amulets," Voltaire could have said the same of himself. But ninety-nine out of every hundred of your American readers would say on perusing this "There, at length, is a man who knows Popery from within, from personal knowledge—a man who, with the modesty of true genius, merely insinuates the extent of his information, and thus avoids Egotism and the offensive display of his gifts."

Such feelings on the part of the American Public ought not to be trifled with by you. Of your knowledge of Popery, as you call it, you know nothing—and you have avowed it. Then you are no more competent to speak or write of it, than Dr. Brownlee was. What you know of it, true or false, you, like him, have learned from its enemies. But there is a difference. Dr. Brownlee never had the chance to learn and then forget the Catholic catechism before the age of eighteen.