

CHAPTER VIII.

A Holiday Pastime.—Essay on Popery.

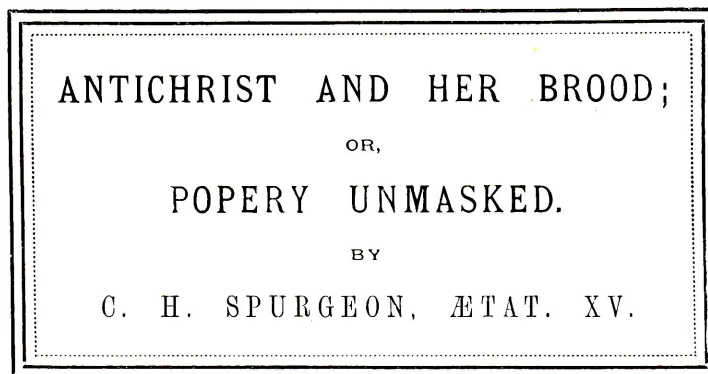
I knew a lad in Christ, who adopted the principle of giving a tenth to God. When he won a money prize for an essay on a religious subject, he felt that he could not give less than one-fifth of it. He had never after that been able to deny himself the pleasure of having a fifth to give. God had wonderfully blessed that lad, and increased his means, and his enjoyment of the luxury of luxuries,—the luxury of doing good.—C. H. S.



IN the library at "Westwood," very carefully preserved, is a bound volume containing 295 manuscript pages, lettered on the back,—

SPURGEON'S
POPERY UNMASKED.

On the front outside cover is a red leather label, with the following words printed upon it in gold letters thus,—



Written in the November and December of 1849, as a kind of holiday amusement, and sent to Messrs Ward & Co's on occasion of a competition for a prize offered by Mr Morley of Nottingham. Although the writer had scarcely a distant prospect of success, he received, two years after, the following note:—

Poplar London,

Dec. 23. 1851.

Dear Sir,

You were one of the competitors for a prize to be awarded for an approved essay on Popery. Your paper is not deemed entitled to the premium, — but the gentleman who offered it, and who is a relative of mine, in approval of your zeal, & in the hope that you may yet employ your talents for the public good, has requested me to offer you £ .. 0 .. 0 as a gratuity. If you will tell me how you wish the money to be sent, it shall be conveyed to you, & your M. S. shall be returned in any way you direct.

I remain
yours truly,

G. Smith

On the opposite page is a *fac-simile* of Mr. Spurgeon's own account of the origin of the volume, and of its appreciation by Mr. Morley, whose Christian name is made known in the second letter from Mr. Smith, who was at that time Congregational minister at Poplar, and who, on August 16th, 1859, met the young essayist, and took part with him in the services held in connection with the laying of the first stone of the Metropolitan Tabernacle:—

“Poplar,

“Dec. 30, 1851.

“My dear Sir,

“Enclosed is an order for ———, which my brother-in-law, Mr. Arthur Morley, of Nottingham, presents to you. I shall be obliged by your acknowledgment of the same.

“It gives me pleasure to hear of your success in preaching the gospel of Christ. God will, I trust, continue to bless you. Depend on Him, and use all the means within your reach for the cultivation and improvement of your mind.

“I remain,

“Yours truly,

“G. SMITH.

“Mr. C. Spurgeon,

“No. 9, Union Road,

“Cambridge.”

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A letter of the same period, written by C. H. Spurgeon to his father, gives further particulars concerning the Essay, and also explains how the writer proposed to use most of the money that had thus unexpectedly reached him. It furnishes besides an interesting glimpse of the young preacher's early services at Waterbeach, of which more will appear in a later chapter, and also of the way in which he was preparing for his great life-work:—

“Cambridge,

“Dec. 31st, 1851.

“My Dear Father,

“Your Christmas letter was quite as welcome to me as [mine was] to you—no good action is ever forgotten. I was at Waterbeach staying among my people, and so did not receive your letter till my return. I preached twice on Christmas [day] to crammed congregations, and again on Sunday quite as full. The Lord gives me favour in the eyes of the people; they come for miles, and are

wondrously attentive. I am invited [to preach at Waterbeach] for six months. My reputation in Cambridge is rather great.

"This letter from Mr. Smith is an honour. I have now more money for books. When I wrote my essay on my knees in the little room upstairs, I solemnly vowed to give two tithes of anything I might gain by it to the Lord's cause. I have written, the money is come. . . . My MS. will arrive here shortly. Now, if you wish, I will send you £ : : [five-sixths of the amount received] as a little present to you and dear Mother—that shall be exactly as you please—I do not know yet how much I am to pay Mr. Leeding. I have enough. Mr. L. has given me a five-pound note, which I shall not touch except for clothes. I mean to keep that money only for clothes; what I earn on Sundays is my own for books, expenses, &c. I hope I am sparing, but I have bought several books, which I could not do without. This week I have purchased a good Septuagint, which is a Greek translation of the Old Testament; you will see it mentioned by commentators. This I did for two reasons—1. To improve my Greek. 2. To assist me in studying the Bible. I got it in two volumes, unbound, for 12s. 6d.—at that price it is reckoned exceedingly cheap.

"Now and then you must give me leave to preach three times, not often. I have done so about four times, I was not at all tired. I shall never do so if I have had a hard day. When I feel myself in tune and not at all tired, I may do so; but only now and then. I must say, however, I always get the best congregation in the evening, or at least just as good, for sometimes it is best *all* day: and you would not have me give up so good a place. I have prayed earnestly that prosperity and fame may not injure me, and I believe strength will be equal to my day. More than one in Waterbeach have declared themselves on the Lord's side—the church is praying hard, and they seem very united.

"I take every opportunity of improving myself, and seize every means of improvement. I have lately attended three lectures in the Town Hall to get information; I trust I do."

[The conclusion of the letter is missing.]

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In order that readers may be able to form some idea of the Essay written by C. H. Spurgeon when fifteen years of age, the headings of the seventeen chapters are here given, with one chapter as a specimen of the other sixteen. That particular portion of the work was selected to show how the writer, even before his conversion, had very clear ideas as to spiritual matters. It is remarkable that he should have quoted in this part of the Essay (see page 63) the very passage which, a few weeks afterwards, the Lord used as the means of his salvation: "*Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.*"

ANTICHRIST AND HER BROOD; OR, POPERY UNMASKED.

HEADS OF CHAPTERS.

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| Chap. | I. | Popery, the Apostate Spirit. |
| „ | II. | Popery Established by Cunning. |
| „ | III. | Popery, a Spiritual Darkness. |
| „ | IV. | Popery, a Mass of Superstition. |
| „ | V. | Popery, a Ravenous Wolf. |
| „ | VI. | Examination of the Claims of Popery. |
| „ | VII. | Popery, a Complicated Idolatry. The Worship of the Virgin Mary |
| „ | VIII. | Popery, a Polytheism. Worship of Saints. |
| „ | IX. | Popery, the Worship of Cast Clouts and Rotten Rags. |
| „ | X. | Popery, a Violation of the Second Commandment. |
| „ | XI. | Popery Teaches the Adoration of a Bredden God. |
| „ | XII. | Popery Perverts and Destroys the Sacred Ordinances of Christianity. |
| „ | XIII. | Popery Surrounds Itself with Rites and Ceremonies. |
| „ | XIV. | Popery, the Inventor of a False Purgation. |
| „ | XV. | Popery, a Gigantic Horseleech. |
| „ | XVI. | Popery, the Religion of Fools, who make a Mock at Sin. |
| „ | XVII. | Popery, the Enemy of Science, and the Bane of the Human Race. |

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CHAPTER III.

POPERY, A SPIRITUAL DARKNESS.

The Bible withheld.—False statement of a priest.—The Scriptures unintelligible because in an unknown tongue.—Bible burnt round the necks of heretics.—Council of Trent.—Blasphemy of its decrees.—Case in point.—Testimony of Du Moulin.—Bible Societies.—Bull of Pius VII.—Bible mystified by notes.—Bible the Word of God.—Popery unchanged.—Bishop of Nice burns Bibles in 1841.—Declaration of Popish Bishops.—Duty to read the Bible.—Sermons omitted.—Ignorance of the Priests.—Sermons nothing but ribaldry.—Immense service of Ignorance.

The three most powerful and most apparent means used by Rome to retain her power over the minds of her votaries are Ignorance, Superstition, and Persecution.

First, then, let us look at Ignorance which, though not “the mother of devotion,” is certainly the favourer of superstition. This has been one of the grand agents of Popery ever since her establishment; by it, the eyes of men have been so blinded that they can scarcely discern between good and evil, and follow implicitly any guide even until they fall into the ditch of perdition.

The grossest ignorance is spiritual ignorance; and the greatest spiritual

darkness is to be ignorant of the only way of salvation as it is revealed alone in the Scriptures.

The Church which withholds the Bible from its members, or takes away from them the genuine Word of God, is guilty of bringing the most dreadful famine upon the minds of men, and will be in a great measure guilty of their blood. This charge is one of the most weighty ever brought against the Church of Rome, and one which can be very easily substantiated.

The Rev. A. Scott, of Glasgow, in a letter against *The Protestant*, a controversial work published about 30 years since, says :—"I can publicly declare—without danger of being contradicted by my brethren, or censured by my superiors,—that it never was a principle of the Roman Catholic Church that the Scriptures should be withheld from the laity, and there never was any law enacted by the supreme legislative authority in the Catholic Church by which the reading of the Scriptures was prohibited. If it was indeed a principle of the Roman Catholic Church to deprive her members of the use of the Divine Word by forbidding them to read and search the Scriptures, she would indeed be cruel and unjust."

Here, then, is a distinguished Roman Catholic priest publicly disowning this great bulwark of Romanism.

We cordially agree with the rev. gentleman, that it is cruel and unjust to withhold the Bible ; but we hope to be able to disprove his barefaced falsehood, and convince the world to the contrary.

The Scriptures were translated into the Latin tongue by Jerome ; but that language becoming dead, and the Church neglecting to supply translations, it was only intelligible to the learned ; it was not forbidden to the people, but it was of no more use to them than a scroll of hieroglyphics. This state of things continued from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries when, at the Council of Toulouse, the Scriptures were forbidden to the laity both in the Latin and vulgar tongues. We all know how violently the Pope was enraged against Wycliffe for his undertaking to translate the Scriptures into English. Had the Pope had his will, the translator and his version of the Bible would have been burnt in the same fire ; indeed, it was no uncommon thing, previous to Luther's Reformation, to burn heretics with the Bible about their necks.

The reading of the Bible was understood invariably to produce heresy ; and there were many who suffered death for no other crime.

In the decisions of the Council of Trent, 1564, this clause occurs :—"Seeing it is manifest, by experience, that if the Holy Bible be permitted to be read everywhere, without difference, in the vulgar tongue, more harm than good results thence, through the rashness of men, let it therefore be at the pleasure of the bishop or inquisitor, with the advice of the parish clerk or confessor, to grant the reading of the

Bible, translated by Catholic authors, to those who, in their opinion, will thereby receive an increase of faith and piety. This license let them have in writing, and whoever shall presume, without permission, to read or possess such Bibles, may not receive the absolution of sins till he has returned them to the ordinary."

Abominable blasphemy! So, then, the Church of Rome *permits* the Almighty, under certain circumstances, to speak to His own creatures!! It *permits* fallen and miserable men sometimes to hear the Word of their Creator!

In the Bible, the Almighty addresses us as by a voice from Heaven: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." The Church of Rome stands by, and presumes to decide who shall and who shall not hear these words of the Almighty Saviour; and if any person shall at all hear them, it is by her permission. Surely, then, this Church of Rome is that Antichrist,—that opposing power that exalts itself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.

To assume the power of permitting creatures to hear what God shall speak, is assuming an authority at least equal to that of God, and a right to control or regulate the manner of His communicating His will to His creatures.

We will suggest a case somewhat similar. Suppose that, in the City of London, there were a number of traitors who had openly rebelled against the Queen; and that she, out of her gracious disposition, and aversion to destroy those traitors, should issue a proclamation promising a free pardon to those who would submit themselves to the authority of the laws. Now suppose that the Lord Mayor and Aldermen were to sit in Council, and consider whether or not they would permit this proclamation to be published in London; and suppose that they should even come to a resolution to *permit* this proclamation to be published, would not this lead you strongly to suspect their loyalty for presuming to put their authority on a footing with that of the Sovereign, and presuming to "*permit*" her proclamation to be published?

God addresses His gospel to sinners as such, in order that, hearing and believing it, sinners may be saved; but the Church of Rome exercises her authority to prevent, as far as she is able, the Word of God from reaching the ears of sinners. She allows it to be addressed only to such as will "thereby receive an increase of faith and piety;" that is, to persons who are already faithful and pious in some degree. Thus, she proves herself to be in league with Satan, for the purpose of keeping men under the bondage of sin to the everlasting ruin of their souls.

But, to return to history, the learned and excellent Du Moulin, a French Protestant divine of the seventeenth century, says, "That the people may be blinded and deceived without understanding so much, the Pope hath wrested the Scriptures out of their hands, and taken order that they should not be translated into a known tongue. Within these few years, the Scriptures were no more known to the people

than the Alcoran ; there were only some Latin Bibles in monasteries and clergymen's houses."

In 1824, Pope Leo XII. styles the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, "Poisonous Pastures," and exhorts the clergy to turn the flock away from them. In a Bull of Pope Pius VII., against Bible Societies, in 1816, he says :—"We have been truly shocked by this most crafty device by which the very foundations of religion are undermined. The Bible printed by heretics is to be numbered among other prohibited books, conformably to the rules of the Index ; for it is evident, from experience, that the Holy Scriptures, when circulated in the vulgar tongue, have through the temerity of men produced more harm than benefit. It is therefore necessary that no versions of the Bible in the vulgar tongue be permitted except such as are approved by the Apostolic see, or published with annotations extracted from the writings of the fathers of the Church."

Here, then, it is declared that the circulation and reading of the Scriptures undermine the foundations of religion, which is certainly true if Popery be the only true religion. There is another Church, however, which has its foundations laid more firmly than the Church of Rome ; this is the Church of Christ, which embraces the Scriptures as its best ally, and finds in them nothing but what is in harmony with itself.

The Church of Rome is afraid to trust the Bible alone, because it destroys the foundations of its religion. If the Scriptures were given to the people simply as they are, Romanism would never be able to stand against them ; it would soon be known that Rome is the very Antichrist. She therefore mystifies the Word of God by means of the words of men ; she puts her own perversions side by side with Scripture ; and declares that, as she alone can interpret them, whatever is said to be the meaning of them must really be so.

Is it not now proved that Popery withholds the Bible from the people ? It may serve as an illustration of the character of Popery if we bear in mind the statement of the priest who declared that it never was a principle of Romanism to deny the Scriptures to the people. Popery is a system of lies ; she will deny or assert, just as it suits her purpose. However, we will readily believe his assertion that, in denying the Scriptures to the people, Popery is "cruel and unjust."

But many Papists will endeavour to justify this prohibition of the Scriptures, and say that it is not the will of God that His Book should be read by common people. Such men, when they hear it said that the Bible contains a complete revelation of the Divine will for the salvation of our fallen race, and is a proclamation of grace and pardon to the very chief of sinners, will exclaim, "What nonsense !" Such was actually the case in a celebrated discussion at Glasgow. But we will leave them to laugh and jeer ; we know that it is the only Book which can cheer the

penitent ; it is God's Word, and that alone upon which a trembling sinner dares to rely. But what argument can be of avail with those who reject truth, who despise the very essence of truth ? Some among them have said, "How do you know that the Bible is the Word of God ?"

Among other reasons which will readily suggest themselves, one alone will suffice. Every Christian knows, experimentally, that the Bible is the Word of God. When a sinner becomes seriously concerned about his character, state, and prospects, if he reads the Bible, he finds at first that it is all against him. By the holy law of God he is convicted and condemned ; and he is conscious of a power and dignity in the Word of condemnation that makes him feel that it is the Word of God. There is a power in the Word that proves it Divine ; and he who has once experienced its influence will never doubt its truth.

All the Popish arguments do but prove that they love darkness rather than light. The Bible is a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path. Man by nature is blind, he runs the downward road with alacrity, he sees not the end ; he would still continue to follow the road which leadeth to destruction had not God, in His infinite mercy, given him a sure guide to bring him from this treacherous way to the straight and narrow path, which leads to His right hand.

Popery could never have been what it is if men had been allowed to read the Bible ; the light of truth would have been too strong for her ; she would have perished prematurely. What an awful account will her great men have to give in, of the blood of thousands perishing for lack of knowledge !

But you will say, "Popery is changed now ; surely, she is much improved."

She has not yielded a point more than she could help ! The true spirit of Popery is not allowed to develop itself in Protestant countries. Here, in England, it would seem that the Catholic is under little restraint. The Bible is printed for his use in England, though always with explanatory notes as if it could not be trusted alone. But on the Continent of Europe, and in other parts of the world, the system has full scope. In Rome, very few of the people know what you mean by a Bible.

In 1841, the Bishop of Nice burnt all the French Bibles he could collect. Can any more flagitious wickedness be conceived than for a creature of the dust, invested with the holy character of a bishop of the living God, and a minister of Jesus, to dare, with sacrilegious hands, to cast into the flames the blessed Book of God, inspired by the Holy Ghost ? In the great dread day of judgment, what excuse will this apostate Church and her Bible-burning priesthood have to prefer before the heart-searching God in justification of these things ?

Dr. Doyle, an Irish Roman Catholic bishop, when asked whether he had ever seen a translation of the Scriptures in the language of Portugal, where he was brought up, answered, "No, I have not." Dr. Murray, another bishop, did not

know for a fact whether there was a Spanish version of the Bible. They both stated that they would refuse the Sacrament to any person who should persist in reading the Bible.

The reading of the Scriptures, then, is still condemned by the Romish Church, in opposition to the Word of God, which says, "Seek ye out of the Book of the Lord, and read" (Isaiah xxxiv. 16); "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me" (John v. 39); "and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians vi. 17); and numerous other exhortations.

But this prohibition of the Bible might not have been so great an evil, if the churchmen had preached the Word of Life to the people. The first triumphs of Christianity were accomplished by the preaching of the gospel, by the mouth of the apostles, and not by the written Word; and, therefore, some amount of religious knowledge might have been communicated to the people by preaching, even in the absence of the Scriptures. But the prohibition of the Bible, together with the ignorance of the priests, soon brought the sermon into disuse, or only on special occasions were any discourses delivered.

About the beginning of the sixteenth century, "the ignorance of the priests was extreme." Numbers could not read, most only muttered mass in an unknown tongue, and read a legend on festival days; the very best seldom saw the Bible. It was held by many that the doctrines of religion were so properly expressed by the schoolmen, that there was no need to read Scripture. One of eminence was asked what were the ten commandments; he replied, "There is no such book in the library." Many doctors of the Sorbonne declared, and confirmed it by an oath; that, though they were about fifty years of age, yet they had never known what a New Testament was. Luther never saw a Bible till after he was twenty years old, and had taken a degree of arts. Carolstadt had been a doctor of divinity eight years before he read the Scriptures; and yet, when he stood for a degree in the University of Wittenberg, he obtained an honour, and it was entered in the University records that he was "*sufficientissimus*." Pelican could not procure one Greek Testament in all Germany; the first he got was from Italy.

Who can wonder at the superstitions and errors of the Church of Rome? When sermons were delivered, they were a collection of forced interpretations, legends fabricated on the spot, and base ribaldry. The people would have been better without them, many of these mock sermons were only calculated to excite the audience to laughter, and to furnish them with amusement for the week. Ignorance held its dark reign, with scarcely a spark of light, and must have been of immense service in the establishment of the kingdom of darkness, and the support of the dominion of Antichrist.