

Bible-Burning :

THE

SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON

PREACHED IN

ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH, BIRMINGHAM,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, DEC. 10, 1848;

BY THE

REV. JOHN C. MILLER, M. A.,

RECTOR OF ST. MARTIN'S.

IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE BURNING OF A SCHOOL GIRL'S COPY OF THE
AUTHORISED VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, BY A
PRIEST OF THE CHURCH OF ROME.

L O N D O N :

HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.; WERTHEIM AND MACINTOSH.

BIRMINGHAM: BENJAMIN HALL.

Price Threepence, or Sixteen Shillings per Hundred.

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JEREMIAH xxxvi. 22, 23.

“—And there was a fire on the hearth burning before him.

“And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.”

If among the vast multitude which is now thronging this sacred building, there be one who has come up hither with the expectation that it would be my object to excite or fan a flame of bitter hostility against the members of the Church of Rome, I trust that he will be disappointed.

If there be any who have come up hither from a feeling of idle curiosity, it is my earnest prayer that they may not leave this Church without obtaining a blessing, though unsought by themselves.

It is *now*, my beloved Brethren, and it *has been* this day, my earnest and heartfelt prayer that, while I discharge what, perhaps mistakenly, yet conscientiously, I feel to be my bounden duty, I may not forget that I am called upon as a minister of Christ to manifest the spirit of my Master; and that while I speak *the truth*, I may do it *in love*. And if, at the close of this discourse, my memory should recall one bitter expression towards the members of that Church whose corruptions I feel it my duty to expose, no one in this congregation could deplore it more than the preacher himself.

May God, in His infinite mercy, send down His blessing on my present endeavours! May He send on us the spirit of candour, the spirit of love, the spirit of faithfulness, that while we strive, as far as in us lies, to “live peaceably with all men,” we may not forget that there is one thing dearer than peace—HIS TRUTH!

I shall say but little on the text itself. The roll which is here spoken of as

having been cut and consumed by Johoiakim was written, as you will observe from the previous context, by Baruch, at the dictation of Jeremiah, a prophet inspired of God; and contained God's threatenings against the corrupt and degenerate Jews. When this roll had been read in the hearing of the king, his conduct was that which is narrated in the text.

Without further reference to my text, I conceive that the most open and honourable manner in which I can proceed is, first to read to you the simple account of the circumstance which has given rise to the delivery of this discourse. Some of my own dear people will remember with gratitude the ministrations of one of the Clergy in this town, now the Incumbent of St. Peter's Church, who was for some months the senior Curate of this parish. That gentleman, I need not say to you, is of such unimpeachable integrity and Christian character as not to admit of any doubt of the truth of his public statement. A little girl attending the Free Industrial School which has been set on foot by my beloved and zealous brother the Rector of St. Philip's, became possessed, it does not appear by what means, of a copy of the Protestant authorised version of the New Testament. To this Testament Mr. Greaves's Letter has reference.

TO THE EDITOR OF ARIS'S GAZETTE.

SIR—I see in your paper of last Monday a statement that a Testament was burnt by a Priest of the Church of Rome in a house in London 'Prentice-street, in this town.

I had written you a letter on the subject immediately on its occurrence; but upon consulting with the Hon. and Rev. Grantham M. Yorke, Rector of Saint Philip's, in whose Free Industrial Schools the Testament in question had been given to a little girl, I determined first, if possible, to obtain the admission of the Priest to what passed between us in conversation. As, however, publicity has been given to the occurrence before I have had time to carry out my plans, I think it best, as the Minister of the district in which London 'Prentice-street is situated, to write to you at once, and say that the statement is strictly true. The Priest acknowledged to me that he burnt the Testament, and also declared that he would burn every Bible or Tract which he found in the houses of any of his people. He also charged me never again to enter

the house of a Romanist in my district; and upon my assuring him that I should pay no attention to his command, and that the law of the land would protect my person, he said he would order his people to use “scurrilous” language towards me, and to offer me insult, if I ventured to pass their doors. Upon my appealing to him, and asking “how he dared to burn the Word of God?” he told me “to go and preach in my pulpit, and not to preach to him.” I merely state facts, and leave your readers to draw their own inferences from them.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

JOSHUA GREAVES,
Incumbent of St. Peter’s, Birmingham.

November 29, 1848.

Now I have no desire to act dishonourably or uncandidly, and therefore I feel it to be my duty to read a document put forth by the body of Roman Catholic Priests in this town, in reference to the above letter. It was published in our local paper of yesterday morning.

“We, the Catholic Clergy of Birmingham, having seen it stated in a letter from the Rev. Joshua Greaves, that one of our body had burnt a copy of the Protestant version of the New Testament, found in the house of a Catholic, have no hesitation at once to admit the fact; but wish at the same time to add that the act was regretted afterwards by the Clergyman by whom it was done, and strongly disapproved of by his brother Clergy, as soon as known. Justice, however, requires us to state that the Catholics of Birmingham had suffered constant and great annoyance from the interference of certain Protestant Clergymen or others, their agents, who frequently intrude themselves into the houses of poor Catholics, unsought for and uninvited, for the purpose of perverting their faith. It was with the knowledge that such a system was going on, and under the excitement of the moment, that the act, which it is not attempted to justify, was done. We take this opportunity of stating that the Catholic version of the Sacred Scriptures is considered by us as the only one authorised for circulation amongst our own people.

BERNARD IVERS, THOS. M. LEITH, WM. MOLLOY. *St. Chad’s.*

GEORGE JEFFERIES, MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN. *St. Peter's*.
J. P. BURKE. *St. Mary's. Handsworth*.

St. Chad's, Birmingham, Dec. 7, 1848."

The signatures include that of the priest who burned the Testament. ^[5]

Now I have no doubt that two objections to my sermon will arise in many minds. First, I can quite imagine that some persons who are here, and many more perhaps who are absent to-night, may be disposed to say, "Is it not unfair"—(I am now speaking of an objection which might have been urged previous to the published statement of the Priests,) "Is it not unfair to charge a whole body with the act of a solitary individual? Would it be fair to the Church of England to identify her, as a body, with the indiscretion or sin of any one of her ministers?"

If it were true that there were nothing in the doctrines or laws of the Church of Rome to identify her with this act, then I should acknowledge the force of the objection; I should fully acknowledge that it would be grossly unfair to charge on any body the act of an isolated individual, unless there were something in the principles, in the laws, or in the practices, of that body which accorded with it.

But a still stronger objection may occur to your minds, after the acknowledgment of the Romish Priests. You may say, "Is not this document signed by the priest who burnt the Testament? Would it not therefore be more generous and more Christian, when he who has done wrong acknowledges his error and expresses his sorrow, to accept his apology and be silent?" This objection, I feel, must be answered.

Now with regard to the reply of the "Catholic Clergy" as they style themselves, it admits the fact, namely, that a New Testament was burnt. And in candour we are to take it for granted that the Priest expresses his regret for having said he would burn other Bibles at any future time. You will remark however, by the way, (though I shall not now dwell upon it,) that there is not a word of regret for the utterance of the threat of scurrilous and abusive language. Not one word is said in reference to this point—that a man calling himself a minister, not of *a branch* of Christ's Church, but of *the Catholic Church*, tells a Protestant Clergyman, in the precincts of his own parish, in

the house of one of his parishioners, that though he shall not advise any to resort to violence against his person, he shall encourage them to use scurrilous and insulting language towards him, if he attempts to pass the door.

But to return to the burning of the Testament.

Making every allowance for the members of a Church who regard the Protestant version as erroneous, I am prepared to show you that this is not a solitary instance of such proceedings in the Romish Church. And therefore it is that, notwithstanding the public expression of regret now read to you, I feel justified in dwelling upon this point. During the past week I received a visit from a Protestant Clergyman from Ireland. I was mentioning this incident to him, and he began to narrate to me one or two other facts of a similar kind. I appeared interested in the subject, and, without any solicitation on my part, yesterday morning, as I was reading the apology of the Priests, the post brought me a letter from this gentlemen, wherein he narrates the circumstance which occurred in the parish of which he was once Curate. I should say, that I have the names of place and persons in my hand and am quite prepared to give them up if necessary. He says—

“When I was curate in the parish of —, diocese of Cork, my esteemed rector the — established a scriptural school in the parish of — which was attended by a considerable number of Roman Catholic children. A Father — the parish priest, visited the house of a man named Sullivan, whose daughter went to our school. Mr. — asked how the little girl was improving, and said he wished to hear her read. She brought him her Bible, which he no sooner saw than he made a rush at her, snatched it out of her hand, called in the neighbours to warm themselves by the light of a “Bible fire,” and then burned it, and heaped the fire to make the blaze the brighter.”

If any person present wishes to see the names he is perfectly at liberty to do so to-morrow morning at my house. I merely mention the circumstance, to show that the Bible-burning in St. Peter’s district is not a solitary instance.

Before however I go to the main line of argument which I shall endeavour to pursue, I will mention a fact which occurred in my own parish, not a hundred

yards from this spot, the truth of which a person present is prepared to substantiate on oath. One of my Scripture Readers, in the course of his visits among the poor Irish, found a considerable number of them almost or entirely unable to read. He came to me (though teaching them to read was no part of his duty, but merely to read to them) to ask whether I should have any objection to his teaching them to read as they seemed willing to learn. I allowed him to purchase a few elementary reading Books; not Testaments or Bibles. He went three or four Sundays, and some of his scholars seemed willing and thankful to avail themselves of the privilege. At last he found they began to look somewhat shy on him. He told them to show the Priest the books from which they were learning to read. The books were produced, and the priest said there was no harm in the books themselves but *they would lead to the Bible*. And, as if to form a complete counterpart to the case in St. Peter's district, as if scurrility and insult were to be added to the burning of God's Word, my Scripture Reader was actually kicked, not by a Priest, but by an Irishman, as he went out of the Court, who used the strongest language, and exclaimed "Break his neck!" "IT WOULD LEAD TO THE BIBLE!" And these poor Irish are doubtless still unable to read, though had my Scripture Reader been permitted to pursue his labours, there is no doubt that by this time they would have been fully able to do so.

Before I pass on to the views and conduct of the Church of Rome in reference to her own versions, I would bring before you the language in which Rome speaks of *our* endeavours to circulate our Scriptures.

You are invited to-night by a seasonable coincidence, to attend a Bible Meeting in the School Room of the very District in which the circumstance which gives rise to this discourse occurred; and I trust if any of you are lukewarm about the Bible Society, you will feel that it is high time for us to meet to circulate the Word of truth, when Priests are burning it. Now what is the language of Rome towards the Bible Society?

Pius VIIth calls the Bible Society "a most crafty device by which the very foundations of religion are undermined—a pestilence—a defilement of the faith most imminently dangerous to souls."

Leo XII. declares of it "That it strolls with effrontery through the world, contemning the traditions of the Holy Fathers, and contrary to the well-

known decree of the council of Trent, labours with all its might and by every means to translate or rather pervert the Holy Bible into the vulgar language of every nation, from which proceeding it is greatly to be feared that what is ascertained to have happened to some passages may also occur with regard to others: to wit that by a perverse interpretation the gospel of Christ is turned into a human gospel, or what is still worse into the gospel of the DEVIL.”

To the same effect is the language of the present Pope in one of his Encyclical Letters. [\[8\]](#)

But I acknowledge that all this does not apply to the main point which I desire to urge this evening. The question that now presents itself is “what is the practice of the Church of Rome in reference to the possession of the Scriptures by their people, even in their own received versions.” And one of the reasons why I am not satisfied with this document issued by the Romish Priests, is, that it would seem to imply—(I acknowledge it is not *stated*, but I ask any man of common sense what would be the impression produced on his mind on reading this acknowledgment) that the Church of Rome does circulate the Scriptures generally? I ask any candid man, would not you conclude and infer from their words, that the only objection of the Romish Church is to the circulation of *what they consider erroneous versions, but that they are endeavouring to circulate their own*? I appeal to your judgments whether what I say is not a fair and legitimate inference from their language. I believe, in my conscience, that it is intended to convey that impression.

Now let us examine carefully—and I earnestly crave *your* attention to this point, my Roman Catholic hearers—what is the language of your Church? You shall not have *my* words. I will give you the words of *your own Church*. And I presume I am not saying anything which a member of the Church of Rome will deny. Nor am I relying on an authority which the Church of Rome can now repudiate. For before I read the extract which I am about to read to you from an Italian writer, it is necessary that I should prove to you that the writer is one fully recognised and endorsed by the Church of Rome. It appears that on the 26th of May, being Trinity Sunday, 1839, Alphonsus Liguori was canonised at Rome, that is to say, he was admitted into the muster roll of the Saints of the Roman Catholic Church. On the 18th

of May, 1803, Pius VII confirmed the decree of the sacred College of the Jesuits, which declared that all the writings of St. Alphonsus had been most rigorously examined, and I beg you to mark what follows—“That not one word” (after this rigorous examination) “*not one word had been found worthy of censure.*” I think then what I can bring forward from writings thus examined, from writings which have been thus broadly endorsed and declared free from censure, from the writings of a man who has been recently canonised, may safely be dealt with as recognised by the Church of Rome.

Many of you are aware that certain books are prohibited to her people. There is a congregation called the “Congregation of the Index,” appointed to examine books to put them into the class of prohibited works. Will you believe the fact that “THE WORD OF GOD”—Protestants! Romanists! let it sink deeply into your hearts—THE WORD OF GOD!—not in the Protestant translation, not in a heretical version, but the WORD OF GOD as received by the Church of Rome—is IN THE ROMISH INDEX OF PROHIBITED BOOKS! I do not ask you to take my word for a fact so incredible. Rome shall speak for herself. Here are the words of the Index.—

“Since it is manifest by experience that if the Holy Bibles are allowed everywhere without difference in the vulgar tongue, more harm than good would arise from it on account of the rashness of men. Let the judgment of the Bishop or inquisitor be abided by in this matter, so that with the advice of the parish priest or confessor *they may grant* the reading of the Bible in the vulgar tongue, translated by Catholic authors to those whom they shall have ascertained to be likely to derive no harm, but rather an increase of faith and piety from this sort of reading, *which permission they must have in writing; but if any one shall presume to read or possess them without such permission, he may not receive absolution of his sins unless he first deliver up the Bibles to the ordinary.*

From Pope Pius 4th, we have the following cautionary rule—That since it is manifest from experience that if the Bible be indiscriminately permitted in the vulgar tongue, more injury than benefit will result through the rashness of men, the use of Catholic versions *shall be granted* by the voice of the priest or confessor to those alone who it is understood will not be hurt by the reading of them, but will be advanced

in faith and piety.”

—“*they may grant*”—“*shall be granted!*”—Man giving permission to read the Bible! That is, on Romanist principles, if one of you, my parishioners, wants to read the Bible, he must come to me, as his Rector, for permission—for a written certificate!

Mark also the *condemnation* by Pope Clement XI of a proposition made by an eminent writer (Quesnel) of the Romish Church.

“It is useful and necessary in every time, in every place, and for every degree of persons, to study and to know the spirit, and piety, and mysteries of the Sacred Scriptures.”

This was laid down by Quesnel, and Pope Clement condemned it.

But I ask “Is it a fact that in this very town, where we have a considerable number of Romanists, the Scriptures are disseminated *in the Romish version?*” One of the excuses which might be urged for the Priest is, that the Testament which was burnt by him was not the authorised version. Two or three weeks have elapsed since he burnt that one, but has he given, in its place, one of his own Testaments? He had not done it up to yesterday morning. What! has he burnt the Testament of a little child without the slightest restitution? Had I taken away what I deemed an erroneous version, at least I should have gone to the first Bible depository and should have said “At any rate, if I take away what I consider erroneous *I must supply what I think is right.*” On his own showing, he was bound to have given the child a New Testament *according to the Romish version.*

But it will be said, “There are many towns where you can buy the Romish version of the Scriptures at their booksellers.” I can attribute this to nothing else than that Rome skilfully accommodates herself to circumstances of time and place. This remark will be deemed uncharitable by many. Brethren, it is not very easy to avoid the appearance of uncharitableness when speaking of the practises of the Church of Rome.

“Dr. Dens, having given the Fourth Rule of the Index, and stated that it is strictly binding in Romish countries, says—‘Yea, rather according to Steyaeret, the law (4th rule of Index) was received and hitherto observed

(with some variety, according to the peculiar genius of nations), in by far the greatest portion of the Catholic world, nay, in the whole of that part of the world which is completely Catholic: *it was more dispensed with only where Catholics lived among heretics.*” ^[11a]

Where the Protestant Bible is extensively circulated, there you will find the Romish Scriptures may be purchased.

But, in the face of the hundreds here to-night, I state it as a fact which may be substantiated by superabundant evidence, that the Church of Rome is still, as by her own showing she is not ashamed to own, opposed to the general circulation of the Word of God in the vernacular tongue, even according to her own received version. ^[11b] And now let us inquire into the reasons for this conduct. The first is, as the words just quoted bear me out in asserting that *they consider that danger and mischief would arise from the general circulation of the Word of God among the masses of the People.* Men and Brethren! I desire to put a bridle on my spirit and on my tongue to-night, but when I hear a man telling me that the Word of the living God—that that revelation which our Heavenly Father has graciously given to us his fallen sinful creatures, to tell us of his love, to make known his will, and to declare the way of salvation—that this is to be denied to the masses of the people, I feel within me (I trust a *holy*) indignation. Why is it not the very glory of the Word of God—is it not one of the best evidences of its adaptation to the wants of man—that while there are mysteries which neither a Bacon, nor a Newton, nor a Locke could fathom, and into which even an archangel can but desire to look—there are lessons which the simplest can fully understand, which a Timothy may learn at his mother’s knees. Is it not a blessed and irrefragable proof of the fact that God intended *all* to have the Bible—that the Bible in its great and vital truths (I do not say its every mystery) is open, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, not merely to the Priest or to the scholar, but to the most ignorant of men? And I will venture to assert that, so far from the Bible being above the comprehension of an uneducated man, whenever you find such an one become a humble, prayerful, reader of the Bible, it expands and strengthens the powers of his mind. Yes! You will find in the courts and alleys of this vast town, many a man who could not discourse to you of this world’s lore, but his eye would kindle, his mind would be all intelligence, and his tongue all fluency, as he began to talk of the wondrous themes of the Word of God.

It is to me one of the strongest proofs that the Bible is the Word of God, that the mind of the most ignorant cannot come into contact with it without becoming elevated thereby:—*The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple:—The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.*

But a second reason for the non-circulation of the Written Word by the Church of Rome, is that *she does not regard it as the alone standard of faith and practice.* Hear one of her champions. You will not find that the Church of Rome repudiates Dr. Wiseman. He plainly says—“The Protestant asserts, and the Catholic denies, that God intended the Scriptures to be the rule of faith.”

Hear also the decree of the Council of Trent—

“Having constantly in view the removal of error and the preservation of the purity of the gospel in the church, which gospel promised before by the prophets in the sacred scriptures, was first orally published by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who afterwards commanded it to be preached by his Apostles to every creature, as the source of all saving truth and discipline, and perceiving that this truth and discipline are contained both in written books and unwritten traditions which have come down to us, either received by the Apostles from the lips of Christ himself, or transmitted by the hands of the same Apostles under the direction of the Holy Spirit, following the example of the orthodox fathers, this Council doth receive and reverence, *with equal piety and veneration*, all the books, as well of the Old as of the New Testament, the same God being the author of both; *and also the aforesaid traditions*, pertaining both to faith and manners, whether received from Christ himself, or dictated by the Holy Spirit, and preserved in the Catholic Church by continual succession.”

Thank God for the contrast which we can present between Rome and our Protestant Church! What then is the language of our own Church?—“Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.”—ARTICLE vi. And then again in the XXth Article she

says—“The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith,”—(the word “authority” is rendered in the Latin Articles not by a word signifying *imperial*, *absolute*, authority, but *weight*, *influence*,)—“and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God’s Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree anything against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce anything to be believed for necessity of salvation.”

Men and Brethren beloved! let this be distinctly impressed upon your minds—that the universal right of the laity—yes, of the uneducated part of the laity—to the Word of God, in their own tongue, is a distinctive principle of the blessed Reformation. As it was the Bible which contributed mainly to enlighten and emancipate the mind of the great Luther, so have the translation and circulation of the Bible in the vulgar tongue been co-extensive with the progress of true religion in this country, since the Reformation. From the time when the large Bible stood in the Parish Church, with its chain to secure it; when the multitudes who wanted to read the Word of God had to flock there and to wait in turns to get to the sacred treasure, or one had to be the reader for the rest; from that time down to the present, when the Christian Knowledge Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and other Institutions have successively given their aid, the Word of the Lord has had free course and been glorified.

And now I submit that I have proved, my case against the Church of Rome. I have shown that the act which, notwithstanding the explanation of the Priests, has excited the astonishment and indignation of Protestants throughout this town, does not stand alone. And more, that even the version which is authorised by the Romish Church is not permitted to be generally read, without the permission of a Priest or authorised person.

Without saying one word which is not entirely consistent with Christian charity, I now ask of you, whether that Church is more in accordance with the will of God, which tells you that, before you read his Word in private, you must have the written permission of the Priest—or that Church which, without exception or reserve, puts into the hand of her every member the written Word of God? What, I would ask, was the language of David? He

was not a Priest—"O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." The poor Romanist, unless he has the written permission of his Priest cannot, amid his troubles and his sorrows, say with David, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."—(PSALM cxix. 54.) Remember too what is said of the Bereans, when they heard Paul preach—"These were more noble than those in Thessolonica, in that they received the word with all gladness of mind, and SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, whether these things were so."—(ACTS xvii. 11.) No Romanist will assert that his Priest is superior to St. Paul. But what did the Bereans do when Paul preached to them? They "SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY" to see whether he was preaching truth. And I tell you that if St. Paul himself, yea, if an angel were to preach to me, I would do the same. But what would be said to a poor Irishman who should go to his Priest and say "I have been looking to my Bible to see what is said there about what you told us yesterday, and I find that what you taught us is not according to the Word of God?" And what does St. Paul say when warning Timothy in his second Epistle (iii. 14, 17) against "perilous times" and evil men? "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that"—Who? the priest?—the scholar?—No!—"That the MAN OF GOD"—whether priest or layman, whether scholar or no scholar—"may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." And contrast his language to Timothy with the case of the little girl from the Industrial School—"From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."—There were no Bible-burners in St. Paul's days. The little girl in Birmingham receives a Testament, and it is not only taken away, but is burnt by the Priest. We read in the Epistle for this morning's service "Whatsoever things were written aforetime *were written for our learning*, that we through patience, and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." It is evident therefore that they were not written to be kept back from the people, but that they were "*written for their learning.*" ^[15] Yet the Church of Rome which arrogates to itself the title of the only true Church puts the Bible into the Index of prohibited books. One more example which the Scriptures furnish—the example of the Ethiopian Eunuch. (Acts viii. 27, &c.) He was sitting in his carriage, reading his Bible, and God sent his minister to him saying—"Understandest thou what thou readest?" Beautiful illustration of a minister's place! It is to explain the Scriptures. He did not say "You cannot

understand them—You ought not to be reading Esaias the prophet.” If he took it out of his hands, it was not to throw it either into the fire or into the water, but he took the book from him and “*began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus.*” And this is our office now, not to stand between the people and the Bible, but to open up the Bible to them, grounding our every sermon, our every lecture, our every lesson, upon it.

I proceed, Brethren beloved, to draw from this mournful occurrence practical lessons, and, in doing so, I trust I shall not violate the rule which, in perfect sincerity, I laid down at the commencement. Of course, the Romanist will think I am violating it, as will some latitudinarian Protestants.

But, I urge, learn from this transaction in our town the *true unaltered character of Popery*. Yes—though many haply do not like that statement, I repeat it—the *true unaltered character of Popery*. We are *bigots* forsooth! which was the bigot?—the man that gave the *Bible* or he that burnt it?

Mark the published statement of the Priests. I am to be told that, put as I am, in some measure, at least, in charge (in accordance with the laws of this country,) over the souls of the people in my parish without exception, I am not to go into the houses of some of my parishioners; or, if I do so, I am to be treated with *scurrility* and *insult*! Let me ask you, does any man or woman here believe that there is a Protestant Clergyman or a Dissenting Minister who would have said that if any Romish Priest came into the house of one of his people he was to be treated with *scurrility* and *insult*? I can only say from the depth of my heart that I should be utterly ashamed of any Protestant Clergyman who so disgraced himself. We are told however by the Priest that if we venture to pass the door of a Roman Catholic we shall be treated with “*scurrility* and *insult*”—I repeat the words because I was careful to ask the Incumbent of St. Peter’s for *the very words* employed. But are we to receive this doctrine? is there any man in this country except the owner of the house or tenement—be it among the humble tenements of London ’Prentice-street, or the villas of Edgbaston—who has the power to say to me that I shall not enter that house? Is it come to this, that, in these days of freedom, in the 19th century, I am not to be at liberty to enter the house of one of my parishioners, whether he be a Roman Catholic or Protestant, (so long as the householder permits my visit) without receiving *scurrility* and *insult* at the instance of a Priest! I, for one, unhesitatingly declare, and I believe I shall be supported in

the declaration by the body of my brethren, that I do not mean to abide by any such rule.

But the Priest was provoked, forsooth, by the conduct of certain Protestant Clergymen and their agents who enter the house of the poor Romanist, to pervert his faith! The charge is that we are making proselytes. If by this it be meant that we are trying to get people over from one Church to another, I demur to it. It is my object, with God's assistance, to make them Christians, to draw them to Christ, but I wish to make them *converts* and not *proselytes*. I wish indeed to see them Church of England Christians, because I believe that my own dear Church exhibits Christ in her Articles and formularies, and is a truly Scriptural Church. But I confess that I was almost provoked to a smile when I read of *the complaints of Rome* that we are seeking to proselytise! Rome which is literally setting wife against husband, daughter against father, by the most insidious artifices; perverting Protestants, and even the children of Protestant Clergymen, by artifices the most subtle! Rome which is not content with contesting the ground with us in our own land but in heathen countries also, as well as in our colonies! The charge of proselytising comes with a very bad grace from the Church of Rome! Let me however say that though I do not wish to *proselytize* but to *convert*, I will not undertake to keep my Scripture Readers out of any house at the dictation of Priest or Pope. I will not undertake to leave men in error and darkness. Let us use lawful, open handed, means, let us not have recourse to subtle artifice. Let us have all as open as the day, and I have no fear for the ultimate progress of the truth. And we ask all members of the Church of Rome to confine themselves to honourable, straightforward, proceedings.

It will perhaps be said that in what I am now about to urge I am trenching on party politics. I appeal to my two years' ministrations in this town, whether I have at any time been guilty of advancing anything in the shape of party politics. But there are some questions in which politics and religion are so intimately blended, that I hold it to be false delicacy to abstain from the bold avowal of our sentiments. I put it to you—are we prepared to pay money to the Romish Priests for burning Bibles in Ireland or in England, without a manful, constitutional, struggle? I know that if you deviate from the simple ground of principle, and begin to talk of *expediency*, a strong case may readily be made. On grounds of expediency, I myself should be disposed to yield, but *as a sworn minister of the Church of England, I have proclaimed*

Rome to be IDOLATROUS; and if you are ashamed of your Church, I AM NOT; and I will not consent, either directly or indirectly, to support idolatry—I will not consent to pay money for a Priest who goes into London 'Prentice-street or into Ireland to burn the Word of God.

But bear with me awhile, while I advance my *second* lesson. *Be thankful for the Protestant Reformed Church of England.* We are not half thankful enough for the Church of England. And though some of our Dissenting enemies desire to pull her down, they little know how much they risk. They little know what a protective position the Church of England occupies between them and the tyranny of Rome. ^[18] Whatever the Church of England may have been in times gone by, and I do not say that the bitter weed of bigotry is entirely eradicated, yet she is now practically a tolerant Church.

But it is the fashion of the day to decry *Protestantism*, “Protestantism is a mere negation!” We do not mean to say that Protestantism will take a man to heaven. But we *do* say that it is the glory of our Church that, when the truth of God had been overlaid with error and corruption, she came out of the corruption herself, and made a bold protest against it. Let us not be ashamed of the name Protestant. We want not Protestantism as a mere toast at a jovial dinner—as the mere shibboleth of a party. Our Protestantism is a *holy* thing. It is a protest against the corruption of the truth of God. And, if you love Protestantism, *dally* not with *Popery*. Don't go to Roman Catholic Chapels to hear the pretty music! Don't let your children have tales and novels which contain poison, simply because they are nicely got up and illustrated. A man may drink poison out of a golden cup; but it is poison still. Your only safety is to have nothing to do with it. Touch not the unclean thing.

Thirdly.—*Circulate the Scriptures.* If you cannot do it by your own individual exertions, join those Institutions which are established for this purpose. Join the Christian Knowledge Society; join the British and Foreign Bible Society. Support our Parish Scripture Readers' fund; and if the emissaries of Rome are going up and down in our town, let us at least be equally diligent; and ask whether we ought not to determine to have an enlarged band of Scripture Readers to counteract their efforts.

Fourthly.—Remember the solemn privilege and responsibility of possessing the Bible. It is a privilege to possess the Bible; but that privilege entails an

awful responsibility. For when the Lord Jesus shall come a second time, to judge the world, he will demand an account, not merely from the Priest who burns the Bible, but the Protestant who neglects it. A neglected Bible is as bad as a burnt Bible. At the last day, it would be better for us to have been members of a Church which withheld the Word of God from its people, than, having the Word, to have neglected and despised it. All you that have the Scriptures in your houses, first given perhaps by some affectionate parent, now no more—Servants, to whom some kind and pious Mistress has given a copy of the Word of God, which you have left unread—you little Children who have received a copy of this Holy Book in the Sunday or the National School—beware lest the Word of God neglected and despised should rise up against you at the last great day. Beware, lest, being Protestants in name, ye be wanting in Bible faith, Bible hope, Bible lives.

Before I sit down, I desire to address another portion of the congregation to-night.

My Roman Catholic hearers, you have not often listened to a Protestant preacher. Perhaps you may never listen to another. And perhaps from what you have read of speeches and sermons against Romanism, you think that we are one and all fire-brands, cherishing and indulging bitter animosity against you.

I am free to acknowledge, and I say it with all honesty, that I much regret the way in which some persons talk about Romanists. I believe that a great many rash and bitter words have been employed; much that is inconsistent in the sight of God with Christian charity. I admit this, but let me also say that you must learn to distinguish between language against *your system* and language against *yourselves*. We *do* believe your system to be idolatrous. We *do* believe it to be opposed in many essential points to the Word of God. And though there be some traitors in our camp who eat our bread and want to fraternize with you, we tell you that the great body of the Protestant Churchmen of England have no sympathy with these traitors. But I earnestly invite your candid attention while I solemnly ask you one question. *Does your Church circulate the Word of God?* I do not say does your Church, in some particular cases, withhold her objection? but as a Church is it a *Bible-circulating* Church? I am dealing with fellow immortals, fellow sinners. Let me a moment put aside the distinctions of Protestant and Romanist. Let us,

my Roman Catholic hearers, recollect that we are both poor worms of the earth—with immortal souls—passing into an awful eternity—an eternity into which you and I may be plunged speedily. I say unto you then, as dying men and fellow sinners, that all is not right, if your Church or your Priests stand between you and the Word of God. I say to you, though the Pope himself preach to you, “*Search the Scriptures*” for yourselves; assert the right of examining the Word of God. I do not say to you “Become a Protestant,” “Become this, become the other;” all I now say is “*Search the Scriptures*” with honest, hearty, humble, childlike prayer. Search them “*daily*.” They will enable you to test the rules and doctrines of the Church of Rome.

When you turn to your Bibles, you will find the *Virgin Mary* there. You will find her there as “highly favoured” and blessed among women—but you will *not* find her as a mediator between yourself and her Incarnate Son; you will *not* find her as the object in any sense or measure, of religious worship. And when you turn to your Bibles, you will find *Confession* there—but you will *not* find confession to your priest necessarily enjoined; you will *not* find that, in order to absolution, you are bound to open to a fellow man all the secrets of your inmost soul. On Calvary alone, and at the foot of the cross, must you confess your sins. And when you turn to your Bibles, you will find *Good Works* there—but you will not find good works to have in any measure an atoning efficacy—but that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law. And when you turn to your Bibles, you will find in them the blessed truth that the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for sinners—but you will *not* find the doctrine of the mass there. “Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many.”—“By *one* offering he hath *perfected for ever* them that are sanctified;” and that offering is never to be, and never can be, repeated.

When you turn to your Bibles you will find that in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper we do, in a *spiritual* sense, by faith, eat the body and drink the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ—but you will *not* find that by the prayer of the Priest, common sense is contradicted, and the bread, and the juice of the vine, turned into the body and blood of the Son of Man.

Beloved, all I ask of you is to test these things by Scripture, and when you have done this, compare the Church of England with that of Rome, and may the Spirit of God be with you as your helper and your guide!

This congregation is now about to separate. The Roman Catholic who is

here, will perhaps never more set foot within these walls. But remember we shall meet again at the last great day. On that solemn day no priest can stand in your stead; no Church doctrines or dogmas can be put in as your plea or excuse before your Judge. You will stand in the presence of Him who made you and hath redeemed you. And if I have seemed to speak bitterly, believe me, in these last words, it is my soul's inmost prayer for every Romanist here present to-night, that, if he be not brought out of that Church before that solemn hour when the wood and hay and stubble shall be burnt up by the judgment-fires, he may yet, spite of his Romanism, be so found on the ONE FOUNDATION—even Jesus—as that we may meet in the Church in glory!

B. HALL, PRINTER, HIGH-STREET, BIRMINGHAM

FOOTNOTES.

[5] I subjoin the following documents, issued since the preaching of this Sermon:—

At a Meeting of the Committee of the Birmingham Auxiliary to the British and Foreign Bible Society, held December 11th, 1848.

It was unanimously resolved:

That the object of the British and Foreign Bible Society being the circulation of the Word of God without note or comment, this Committee cannot pass unnoticed the dishonour done to the Word of God by the act of a Roman Catholic Priest in this town, who, during the last month, burned a copy of the New Testament; nor the attempt made by his coadjutors and himself in repudiating that act, to excuse it in some respect, inasmuch as that excuse rests upon principles which, carried out to their legitimate conclusion, would infringe upon our undoubted right to circulate the Word of God, wherever parties of any and of every creed are willing to receive it.

TO THE EDITOR OF ARIS'S GAZETTE.

Sir—It is with much regret that I am obliged again to come before the public on the subject of the Testament which was burnt in London 'Prentice-street, in this town, by the Rev. W. Molloy, a Priest of the Church of Rome, but the cause of truth demands it of me. It is stated in the apology put forth by that Rev. Gentleman and his coadjutors, "that the act was regretted afterwards by the Clergyman by whom it was done, and strongly disapproved of by his brother Clergy as soon as known," and that it was "under the excitement of the moment that the act, which it is not attempted to justify, was done."

Now Sir, I ask you, as I ask the public, are these statements consistent with the following facts:—The Testament was burnt on Thursday, Nov. 16, about two o'clock p.m., and it was not till the following Saturday, about midday, that I had any conversation with the Priest upon the subject.

Being in London 'Prentice-street on the Saturday, Mr. Molloy sent for me to the house where he had burnt the Testament, to ask if I supposed that the woman to whose daughter the book had been given was a Protestant, because he had heard that I had visited her the day before. It was upon that occasion that I enquired of him whether or not he had burnt the Testament; he told me that he had, and would burn every Bible and Tract he found in the houses of his people. I warned him that I should make his words public, and he told me I was perfectly welcome to do so. I further remember saying that I had often been told that I had unjustly charged the Romish Priests with denying the Bible to their people, and his reply was to this effect—"You have stated the truth, and are perfectly welcome to state it when you will; you are furthering our objects by doing so." There are several other points in the apology on which I should much like to dwell, but I think it best simply to state facts, and leave the public to judge for themselves whether the apology that this act was done in the excitement of the moment can apply to Mr. Molloy, who, after the reflection of two days, threatened to repeat the act again and again.

I remain, Sir, your obedient Servant,

JOSHUA GREAVES,
Incumbent of St. Peter's, Birmingham.

December 14, 1848.

[8] "Hopes had been raised of a new order of things, as a new Head, of a widely different character from any of his predecessors, ascended the Papal Throne. Yes—rail-roads and gas-lights shall be admitted for the first time in the dominions of Him of Rome: but, not the Bible Society; that shall be denounced with as loud a voice of thunder, as ever proceeded from the City of the Seven Hills. That voice of thunder has been re-echoed by Cardinals and others, in France, Holland, and

elsewhere; and so re-echoed, that many a faint heart has quailed; and some, who before stood half-prepared to encourage the dissemination of the Scriptures, have drawn back and closed the door before half-opened. And yet, even among Roman Catholics, the distribution of the Scriptures has proved as large as ever.—In no previous year has the Society been counted worthy of suffering a fiercer vituperation from this quarter than during the past. Take as an example, the following paragraph from a famous Encyclical Letter, and see with what company the Society is associated:—

“You are already well acquainted, Venerable Brethren, with other monsters of error, and the frauds with which the children of the present age strive bitterly to beset the Catholic religion and the Divine authority of the Church: to oppose its laws, and to trample on the rights of the sacred as well as of the civil power. To this point tend those guilty conspiracies against the Roman Chair of the blessed Peter, on which Christ laid the irremovable foundations of his Church. To this point tend the operations of those secret Societies, emerging from their native darkness for the ruin and devastation of the common weal, as well sacred as social, who have been again and again condemned with anathema by the Roman Pontiffs our predecessors, in their Apostolic Letters, which we, in the plenitude of our Apostolic power, confirm, and command to be most strictly observed. This also is the tendency and design of those insidious Bible Societies, which, renewing the crafts of the ancient heretics, cease not to obtrude upon all kinds of men, even the least instructed, gratuitously and at an immense expense, copies in vast numbers of the Books of the Sacred Scriptures, translated (against the holiest rules of the Church) into various vulgar tongues, and very often with the most perverse and erroneous interpretations; to the end that (Divine tradition, the doctrine of the Fathers, and the authority of the Catholic Church being rejected,) every man may interpret the revelations of the Almighty according to his own private judgement, and, perverting their sense, fall into the most dangerous errors. Which Societies, emulous of his predecessor, Gregory XVI., of blessed memory, (to whose place we have been permitted to succeed, without his merits,) reprov'd by his Apostolic Letter (16) and we desire equally to condemn.”—*Forty-third Report of the British and Foreign Bible*

Society.

[11a] “Awful Disclosure, being Extracts Translated from the Moral Theology of Alphonsus Liguori,” by Rev. R. P. Blakeney.

[11b] “When Drs. Doyle, Murray, and Kelley, the Irish Roman Catholic Bishops, were examined before a committee of the Parliament, the following confessions were made by them:—(*Question to Dr. Doyle*)—You were educated in Portugal? Yes. Did you ever see in Portugal any translation (of the Scriptures) into the vulgar tongue, whether allowed or not? No, I did not. (*Question to Dr. Murray*)—You were educated in Salamanca? I was. Can you give any information as to any authenticated version of the scriptures in the Spanish language? I did hear that there was a Spanish version of the Holy Scriptures, but I do not happen to know the fact. Have the Scriptures any practical circulation in the vulgar tongue in Spain? They had not then. Have the people seen the Scriptures in a language they could understand? I believe they were not generally read by the people. Do you imagine that any material portion of the people have so much as seen the Scriptures in a language they could understand? I do not know that they have.”

Hear again extracts from the evidence of these Roman Catholic Bishops before the Parliamentary Commissioners, 1825—

“*Ques.* Are the Commissioners to collect that you think it improper for the children to read through the Gospels and Acts? *Ans.* Without explanation I think it is improper; I think no portion of scripture ought to be read without being accompanied with explanation and instruction. *Ques.* Is it a venial or a mortal sin in an adult peasant to persevere in reading the New Testament in the authorised version of the Church of England, after his priest has forbidden it? *Ans.* I should feel great delicacy in fixing the amount of guilt which constitutes the one or the other. *Ques.* Would you allow any of the peasantry of Ireland who might persevere in reading the Scriptures in the authorised version, after having been prohibited by your clergy, to be received to the Sacrament? *Ans.* No, I certainly would not. *Ques.* Should you think it improper for such an individual to bury the Word of God? *Ans.* I should be highly amused with such a proceeding. *Ques.* Would you think him highly

deserving of approbation? *Ans.* I do not know but I would: it might show a disposition which I would prize highly, though I do not think the act a very laudable one, but attending to the disposition more than the act itself, I would reward the man. *Ques.* You would consider it in the man a proof of orthodoxy? *Ans.* Yes, a proof that he was filled with a right faith, only pushed to an extreme.”

Now compare with these answers what Dr. Doyle said in his evidence respecting the authorised version.

“Though it has many errors I consider it one of the noblest of works—one of the ablest translations that has ever been produced.”—*See No. IV. Tract of the British Reformation Society, pages 5, 6, 7.*

[15] “Do we still then ask why the Holy Scriptures were given to us by Divine Providence? That question I conceive admits only of the following answer. They are a gift to us and to our children, collectively and individually, that we may lay them to our hearts, that they may be to us our rule of life, and that by following their precepts we may daily approach nearer and nearer to God. This I repeat must be their great and primary object. They are not then, nor were they ever intended to be, a hidden treasure, hoarded up in the sanctuary of the Church, to be visited only on solemn occasions, to be held up at a distance to the veneration of the multitude, to serve only as a test of the accuracy of our oral teaching, but they are at once the individual possession, the personal friend, the monitor, the familiar oracle of every servant of Christ.”—*Dr. Shuttleworth’s Not Tradition but Scripture.*

[18] Greatly should I rejoice, were those of our Dissenting Brethren who refuse to take part in such proceedings as those of the Anti-State Church Association, publicly to repudiate, at least, their language and spirit.

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Table of Contents

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