

ROMANISM IN LONDON.

A PRIEST'S CONFESSION!

THE SUBSTANCE OF A CONVERSATION

BETWEEN THE

REV. JOHN BONUS,

A ROMISH PRIEST; AND THE

REV. ROBERT MAGUIRE, B. A.,

CLERICAL SECRETARY OF THE ISLINGTON PROTESTANT INSTITUTE.

Reprinted from the "Morning Herald" of Thursday, Oct. 21st, 1852.

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IN one of the leading articles of a morning paper of Tuesday, the 19th of October, the following occurs:—"We shall not stone them (the Roman Catholics) as idolaters, though they want but the power to burn us as heretics."

As a practical illustration of the truth of the above, may I be permitted to relate the substance of a conversation which I had on Friday, 15th Oct. with a Roman Catholic Priest in this city?

Our interview was occasioned simply by the following circumstances:—A young gentleman, a member of a Protestant family, was some five years ago induced to become a Roman Catholic. He was much esteemed by the highest authorities in his newly-adopted faith;—was for a time at Oscott; at the Oratory in Birmingham; and lately at the Dominican College at Woodchester, near Stroud. In these places he had been preparing for the

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Romish priesthood; yet during the course of his studies many doubts arose in his mind, all which were further confirmed by the fact that *consecrated* hosts had been administered in a *corrupted* and *mouldy* state! That "the real body and blood of Christ," which God had promised should "see no corruption," that *it* should thus present a *corrupted* condition appeared to him an insuperable difficulty. He consulted his confessor, and was met by mere evasions. He then consulted very high authorities in the Romish Church elsewhere, who might here be named, and whose letters he retains, and received from them in reply worse than evasions. These only confirmed his doubts, when happily he met with a devoted clergyman in his own neighbourhood, whose ministry the young man's family attended. With him he had many interviews, which happily ended in his return to the truth.

Just then I met with him. We have since been very intimate one with the other. Attempts have been, however, not left untried by his Romish friends to win him back to Rome. One friend of his, a Roman Catholic Priest, who had once been a Protestant, wrote to my young friend, expressing his anxiety to see him, and stating that "he felt an inward inspiration" in his soul that he would be made the means of restoring him to the Romish Church.

Under these circumstances, my advice to the young man was, that he should accept the interview, provided I should be permitted to accompany him. He wrote to his friend accordingly, and received in reply a letter expressing his delight at

the prospect of seeing him. His letter proceeded thus:—"No objection, my dear fellow, to one friend, nor ten, nor fifty; even though they be so many John Cummings. As you allow me the selection of a day, I will come on Friday next, the feast of St. Theresa, *who, I doubt not, will help me* to resolve your doubts. Don't look forward to our meeting as anything dreadful, but just offer up a little bit of a prayer (an Ave Maria?) "Come, you can't object to that."

Hence the interview of which I now write; and I must say that so extraordinary was the conversation of the Roman Catholic Priest, or rather, so clear and unmitigated the Popish sentiments by him expressed, I told him in plain words, that although I should not wish to take any undue advantage of a private conversation, yet he should understand that I would take occasion to publish the remarks which he made during our interview: to this he assented.

The Roman Catholic priest of whom I now write is the Rev. John Bonus, late of Greenwich, now of Moorfields. His letters to my young friend can be seen; and whatever is here detailed, was expressed in the presence of this young man, who will, if required, certify as to the accuracy of my narration.

The costume of Mr. Bonus on the occasion was strictly Romish. His manner was as though he would make short work of my friend's doubts, and at once restore his confidence in Rome. "You have been scandalised, no doubt," said he, "by the want of piety and zeal evinced by your former Roman Catholic friends." "By no means," said

my friend; "quite the contrary. 'Tis true I have witnessed scenes inconsistent with the professions made, yet I have not for these reasons abandoned your Church. I do indeed remember one evening at Woodchester, when a Dominican preached, and in his sermon spoke of the B. V. Mary in terms which ought to be applied to Christ alone; and when I left the chapel after the sermon, one of the priests told me, in his own private apartment, that such preaching would do harm to the cause. 'It may do very well for old women,' he said, 'but *we* don't believe such things!'" These were unpleasant revelations for Mr. Bonus, and he quickly led away my friend to "the awful deed which he had done in leaving the Holy Church." He dwelt specially on the word "holy." Whereupon I, for the first time, addressed him, by asking what he would think of a person who should sanction immorality? He replied that he would think very badly of him. And what then, I asked, would you think of a body of men—a Church—which would sanction immorality? He gave the same answer. I then asked, "Have you ever read the Theology of St. Alphonsus Liguori?" "I have," said he; "what of it?" "Have you read his treatise on the commandment,—'Thou shalt not steal,'—where he actually defines the sum which may be abstracted from a person, and yet no great sin committed?" Mr. Bonus then turned from me, stating that I knew nothing at all about these things, and requested that I would allow him to speak to his friend without interruption! I remarked that such reply was no answer to my objection. He had spoken of his Church being

“Holy,” and I insisted on my objection being answered. He replied that, in order that I should know their Dogmatic Theology, I should be acquainted with the principles thereof; that I should be quite made up on such points, as *de actibus humanis* and *de conscientia*, and so forth; and that till then I could not *understand* their theology. I said, “Theology was made and intended for all men; and more than that, God’s command is very explicit,—‘Thou shalt not steal.’ Why then require all this preliminary knowledge, especially if such knowledge should run directly counter to the express command of God?” These and such like remarks presently induced him again to request that I would keep silence. “Well,” said I, “now hear my friend’s reason for leaving your Church; and we shall then hear your answers.”

The case of “the corrupted wafers” was then adduced as one reason. The Priest at once lay back in his chair, and proceeded to assure my young friend that before he himself became a Romanist he had been an avowed infidel; that doubts overwhelmed him, &c.; warned the young man of death and judgment, &c., and thus proceeded until I felt myself again obliged to interfere and recall him to the real question. This annoyed him a little, but I thus stated the objection: “You, as a Roman Catholic, say that the wafer is changed into the body and blood of very Christ, and that Christ is truly and bodily there. Now in the 16th Psalm it is written, ‘Thou wilt not suffer thine *Holy One* to see corruption.’ The *consecrated* wafers now in question *did* see corruption, and therefore are not, and cannot be Christ;—that is

my friend's objection. It is for you now to answer it."

The priest then commenced his explanation, and after reminding the young man that if they were *alone* he could tell him many things! he resumed, "You must know," said he, "that in our Church Sacraments are *magic spells*." I then remarked, "And magic spells require *magicians*;" to which he quickly and peevishly replied, "Well, we *are magicians* in that sense"! He then entered on a dissertation relative to "entities," and "quiddities," and "essences," and "substances," and "accidents,"—the Monods of Liebnitz and *philosophy* in general, almost to no end; and informed us that he never knew philosophy or metaphysics until by the permission of the Cardinal he studied in Louvain University; that there he read all these things, even to *Whately's Logic*. "Why, my friend," said I, "'Whately's Logic' is in the Index of prohibited books;"—"And so it ought," he replied. He spoke of the chances to which the Host is exposed, and said, "I suppose you think if a cat, or a rat, or a mouse should run away with it, or if I should throw it out of the window, that it would be a great indignity to Christ; but I tell you it would not," he said, and endeavoured to prove by *philosophy* that there is no bodily presence at all in the Eucharist, and that if we knew philosophy we could understand this. I remarked that the words of the Church of Rome on this subject are express and unmistakeable,—“the body and blood, soul and divinity, *bones and sinews*,—a whole and perfect Christ,”—as the Council of Trent and the Catechism of Trent ex-

pressly affirm. All this he, however, endeavoured to explain away,—spoke of “realities” and “ideas,” &c. I, however, told him that the Church of Rome claims a real true bodily presence, and remarked that *a body* cannot be in more places than one at the same time: to this he replied by saying, “That is just what *an ass* would say!” I asked him then, “Could your body,—your bones and sinews,—be in two places at the same time?” He said that they *could*! “What!” said I, “do you mean to say that that body of yours which I now see, may all this time be in *Moorfields* also?” To which he replied that “it might for aught he knew!” To which I replied, that the most charitable view I could take of the matter was, that his *body* must really be in *Moorfields* at the time, and that it must be only his *ghost* to which I was then speaking! Each remark of mine drew forth some angry epithet from the priest; so much so that my young friend, in whose house we met, remarked to the priest, “You may call names to Mr. Maguire, but surely you cannot imagine to convince *me* by such answers.”

The Priest then endeavoured to draw us off to *mesmerism* and *clairvoyance*, and *thence* to support his tottering cause. He invited my friend to come with him to see a newly-invented *machine*, by which *the state of his conscience* would be laid before him, and all the process exposed by which he was led to abandon the Church of Rome,—that a friend of his had such to exhibit. All this, of course, was very, very far removed from our subject. The young man’s objection was as yet anything but *answered*. The Priest changed from threats to

exhortations, then to warning, then perchance to *Philosophy*, as he called it, but kept very far off from *Scriptural argument*.

At length he stood up and addressed to my friend a rebuke for returning to the Church of England. Whereupon I stood up and asked him what fault he had to find with our Church,—what prayer, what form, what one particular could he instance as being objectionable? “Your ‘orders,’” he replied. “Well,” said I, “point out any flaw in *my own* ordination.” (I instanced my own as a case whereon to try his objection.) His reply was that he had *no objection* to urge in *my* case. “Well now,” I replied, “may I in return ask you are *you* a priest at all? Have you *any* certainty that the bishop who ordained you had the *intention* of ordaining you?” He frankly acknowledged that he was not *morally certain* as to whether he was ordained or not, and admitted that if he be not a priest, every priestly function that he discharges is but a *sacrilege!* The expression “*morally certain*” he afterwards corrected for “*mathematically certain*.” I reminded him of the awful consequences in which he involved his people,—he leads them to believe that he can pardon their sins, and yet he is not *certain* whether he be even a priest, and thus he usurps authority to which he possesses no *certain* title! Again, that after he has, as is thought, consecrated the host,—yet if he be not a priest, those who worship that host as God, when it is still professedly unchanged, are guilty of idolatry. This he admitted, but limited it to “*material idolatry*,” which, however, I reminded him is the very worst kind of “creature

worship." This he denied; whereupon my friend, taking a book off the table, asked the priest, "If I worship that book as God, do you mean to say that such worship is not idolatry?" His reply was, *that it would not be so!* Such is the certainty which on the avowal of a Roman Catholic priest attaches to Rome even in her most solemn sacraments, and such the theology inculcated by her acknowledged teachers!

The Priest endeavoured to leave the subject and my friend's objection, by entering on "the Rule of Faith." Before he had gone far, however, (still it was all *philosophy*,) I laid down the Holy Scriptures beside him as *my* "rule of faith," and demanded of him to lay down *his*, side by side with *mine*. He of course could not, but said that his "rule" is "the Authority of his Church." "That is just what I want," I said, and inquired "*How* or *where* can I consult such a 'Rule?'" He then replied, "I am the rule of faith!" "Do you mean *yourself*?" said I. "Yes," he replied. "Well," said I, "that you should be a proper 'rule of faith' you ought to be *infallible*." "And so I am!" he said. "Whatever I teach," he remarked, "is the infallible doctrine of the Church, but this—only in the *archdiocese of Westminster*: here I have jurisdiction; but in Southwark my teaching would be only the expression of *an opinion!*" I thereupon asked the priest, "Is not truth invariable? How, then, can that which is sterling truth on this side of London Bridge, become merely *an opinion* beyond it?"

This discovery, however, of "the Rule of Faith" in the Roman Catholic Church reminds me of an

offer which still is repeated in Ireland, of £40,000, for the Roman Catholic rule of faith! Now that I have actually found it, I may myself lay claim to the "Reward!"

I am, however, by this incident more and more confirmed in my belief, that no Roman Catholic possesses *any* rule of faith beyond the *dictum* of his priest.

I asked this priest of Moorfields why he did not in his letter rather seek the aid of *the Holy Spirit* than that of *St. Theresa*. To this he ironically replied, "That is *Evangelical*." "Well," said I, "to ask for the guidance of God's Holy Spirit is 'Evangelical,' but then, I presume, to ask the aid of *St. Theresa* is Romanism!" If so, give me rather that which is "Evangelical" than that which is Romish! The one seeks help from God,—the other, *human* aid!

But the last of all is *the worst of all*. This priest, who has thus studied *philosophy*, gave us a little more of unmitigated Popery. He told me, in presence of my friend, that if he should find me among his Roman Catholic people he would advise them, not *just now* to kill me, but to roll me well *in pitch and tar*, and, *if they had the power*, then *to burn me*,—that nothing but the punishment of *death* would ever do for heretics. "I assure you," said he, "I would not burn you *now* because it would be just now *inexpedient* to do so, and would do much harm to our cause; but if we had the power"—and he gloated over the possibility—"I wish that I had the power—I would kill every Protestant! This worked well while the *Inquisition* worked." These sanguinary ex-

pressions he again and again used before we parted. What a fearful, awful, and persecuting Church is this, which now seeks "to govern England!"

I asked this Priest how he could explain the fact of the Cardinal having denied that he subscribed the persecuting clause in the Roman Catholic Bishops' oath? The priest said that the Cardinal had never denied any such thing. We assured him that the matter was as patent as could be, and that the Cardinal had purposely *erased* the clause from the oath, leaving the same oath, however, *untouched* in another part of the "Pontificale." "Well," said this Priest, "the Cardinal assuredly *did* swear to that clause, *for every bishop must take it!*" "Then, why did he erase it?" I asked. I forbear to say how he accounted for this; his remark might injure him at head-quarters, and this I seek not. I ask not to injure his worldly prospects. May God change his heart, and enable him by His grace to forsake this "refuge of lies."

Many may say, on reading this, that I have been dealing with either a madman or one who is far too honest for Rome. I accept neither alternative. The Priest of whom I have been writing, has been formally appointed to his work by the Cardinal himself; has had, as he himself says, some success in his labours; and since the above interview, I have seen (in the *Tablet* newspaper of last Saturday, Oct. 16) that the Roman Catholics of Greenwich have within the last few days presented *this very priest* with a golden chalice, as a mark of their *esteem*, on his departure from amongst them!

Your readers must also bear in mind the object of our interview—namely, the restoration of a lapsed member to the Romish Church. On such an occasion, undoubtedly, he would put forward his *best* arguments, and such as would best tend—at least in his own opinion—to re-establish his friend.

I intend to forward to the Rev. Mr. BONUS a copy of your paper in which this letter is inserted, and both my young friend and myself challenge contradiction.

This accredited Priest of Rome, then—this acknowledged servant of the Cardinal—this Louvain-taught man—this man, the honoured of Greenwich—*he* has openly avowed himself *a persecutor*—has acknowledged that which is in deed and in truth the very genius of Popery; but which, with all our warnings and with all the telling pages of history, Englishmen treat as but an idle tale. Yet the dread *reality* may one day come upon them! I have told this tale in all simplicity and truth, and use it as a warning to our great and noble nation to BEWARE OF ROME!

ROBT. MAGUIRE, B.A., Clerical Secretary
to the "Islington Protestant Institute."

12, Lonsdale Square, Islington, Oct. 19, 1852.

I feel much pleasure in bearing my testimony to the accuracy of the above statement of our interview with Mr. BONUS—an interview which tended greatly to establish me in the Scriptural truth of our *Protesting Church*.

(Signed) HENRY BRAMAH.

1, Guildford Street, Russell Square, Oct. 20, 1852.