

THE
ROMISH DOCTRINE OF INTENTION:

IN

AN UNANSWERED LETTER TO THE ROMAN
CATHOLIC PRIESTS OF LIVERPOOL;

AN APPEAL THEREUPON TO THE ROMAN CATHOLICS
OF LIVERPOOL,

AND

A SUPPLEMENTAL LETTER, ADDRESSED TO THE
EDITOR OF THE LIVERPOOL STANDARD.

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL MINTON, M.A.

Incumbent of Silas's.

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THE
ROMISH DOCTRINE OF INTENTION :

ITS BEARINGS UPON INFALLIBILITY, IDOLATRY, AND
CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

IN THREE LETTERS.

LETTER I.

TO THE ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS OF LIVERPOOL.*

REV. SIRS,—The Romish doctrine of “Intention,” as defined by the Council of Trent, is of such a nature that a Protestant can scarcely be surprised at your not wishing to give it any needless publicity ; nor can you be surprised at his being equally anxious to give it all possible publicity. This was the sole motive which induced me to invite you to a public discussion on it at the close of my lecture last Monday week, and which induces me again to call your attention to that invitation, through the medium of the press.

The doctrine in question is one that requires no great power of learning or intellect to overthrow ; it only requires to be *known*. And as considerable attention is generally directed to a theological discussion, however insignificant may be the persons engaged in it, I would willingly encounter, for the sake of gaining such an object, what on personal grounds I should of all things most shrink from. It is remarkable how very little Protestants in general are aware even of the existence of such a doctrine in your church ; and no less remarkable, that it is not put more prominently forward in the controversy by those who are aware of it. For surely a more powerful lever to upturn your whole system no controversialist could desire.

The great boast of your church is, that she offers a secure and peaceful refuge from the doubts and uncertainties of Protestantism. Now, what approach to certainty or security can you offer to any one of your flocks on the points that most immediately concern the salvation of their souls ?

* Reprinted from the “Liverpool Mail.”

There can be no danger, I suppose, of any disagreement between us, when I say that your system is pre-eminently a *sacramental* one. From baptism to extreme unction, sacraments of one kind or another are the grand essentials to salvation. Grace is conveyed by or through them; and in some cases, as in that of absolution for an "*atrite*" person, the individual's very salvation may depend upon the *validity* of the sacrament administered to him. But your church has decided in the following decree of the Council of Trent, that however properly the *form* of administration may be gone through, the whole thing is null and void, unless the officiating priest *intended* to administer it. "Whoever shall affirm, that when ministers perform and confer a sacrament, it is not necessary that they should have at least the *intention* of doing what the church does; let him be accursed."—Sess. 7, can. xi. And to show that this is no mere general intention, which can with certainty be inferred from the priest's outward conduct (an "*external intention*," as some Romanists have said), your own missal, on "the defects of the mass," sec. 7, declares, "If any one has before him eleven wafers, and intends to consecrate only ten, not determining *what ten* he intends, in these cases he does not consecrate [that is, *any of them!*] because *the intention* is required." How, then, can any member of your communion, up to the day of his death, know that he has ever received a single sacrament of any kind in the whole course of his life? How can he possibly know what was passing in the priest's mind on each occasion? How can he possibly know what was the secret *intention* of the priest who baptised him, of the priest who married him (for *matrimony* is a sacrament in the Church of Rome), of the priest who absolved him, of the priest who gave him the eucharist, or of the priest who gave him extreme unction? And if he *could* know all this, how much nearer would he be to that comfortable *certainty* which your church offers so profusely? For the validity of a sacrament, according to your doctrine, depends not only on the priest's intention, but also on the *validity of his orders*. But *orders*, in the Church of Rome, is itself a sacrament; and therefore requires the *intention* of the administrator, that is, of the consecrating bishop, as much as any other sacrament. So that, for any one to know that he receives a true sacrament, he must know *the intention of every bishop* in the supposed line of succession, between the particular priest, who administers it to him, and the particular apostle from whom that priest is supposed to derive his orders. For if the intention has been wanting in any single link of the chain, the chain is broken;

and, according to your doctrine of apostolical succession, every link from that downwards is utterly worthless : a non-conductor has interposed itself, and the electric current is stopped, hopelessly and for ever, in that line. And this is the infallible church ! This is the *rock*, the *sure* foundation, for which we are to desert the treacherous quicksands of Protestantism, and on which we are confidently to build our hopes for eternity ! This is the impregnable fortress, the peaceful haven, the quiet refuge, the calm retreat, where we are to bid a final adieu to all the doubts, and difficulties, and dangers, and perplexities, and uncertainties, which must necessarily attend a simple trust in the Word of the living God ! !

There is, however, one feature in the practical working of this doctrine of Intention to which I would take the liberty of calling your most serious attention. The charge most pertinaciously alleged against your church by Protestants, and by you as pertinaciously denied, is that of Idolatry. Passing over, then, the invocation of saints, the worship of the Virgin, the veneration of images, and relics, &c., which have nothing to do with the doctrine in question, we come to the worship of the Host. Here there is no hair-splitting as to the *kind* of worship required from your people. They are enjoined to worship, with the worship due to God only, what looks like a piece of bread, *on the supposition* that by the priest's consecration it has been actually changed into the one living and true God himself. But, without entering upon the question of transubstantiation, you yourselves must admit, or, at least, your church does, that if *the intention* of the officiating minister, or a single link in the chain between him and the Apostles, be defective, *there is no consecration* ; the Host remains just what it was before, and the assembled congregation are worshipping *as God a piece of bread* ! Now, one of your favourite controversial books asserts that "the Papist, truly represented, believes it damnable to worship breadden gods." And yet not a Roman Catholic in the world, when he bows before the Host, can possibly know (*on your own principles*) whether he be worshipping the Creator of heaven and earth, or a "breadden god ;" for that entirely depends upon the complication of uncertainties above-mentioned. So that every member of your communion, who believes the doctrine of Intention, is reduced to this dilemma : he must either disobey his church, and submit to all the consequences of such disobedience, which of course will vary according to circumstances ; or he must wilfully and knowingly *run the risk* of committing "damnable" idolatry. Here is peace and comfort !—here is

settled assurance! To pass through life, and to face death, *hoping* that you have not been perpetually guilty of "damnable" idolatry! If this alone be not sufficient to involve your church in the guilt of idolatry, you must surely allow that it places her in most fearful proximity to it.

And now is there not one priest in all Liverpool that will stir a finger to help his church out of the strange predicament, in which, to our eyes at least, this doctrine seems to place her! I admit most fully the unpleasantness of a public discussion; nor do I mean for a moment to imply, that a minister of religion is bound, at any one's call, to defend his doctrines in any particular way that may be demanded of him. But, gentlemen, common rumour is more than ordinarily false, if some of you have not very lately resorted to *sham* discussions in your chapels or schools, in order to show your people the weakness of Protestant argument against Romanism. Will there be no danger, think you, of their beginning to suspect something must be wrong, if, after triumphantly putting to flight whole armies of imaginary foes, you are not to be found the moment a real one appears in the field? May it not possibly shake some of their pillows? And if they find you altogether unable to smooth them again, may they not be actually awakened out of their dream of safety? If you like to smile at the supposition of such a thing, and prefer still keeping quiet, I shall be only the better pleased, and will most sincerely thank you, not only on personal grounds, but still more for the valuable admission, that the doctrine of Intention (by which, of course, as much as by any other of her doctrines, Rome's claim to *infallibility* must stand or fall) *will not bear being brought to light even by its own advocates.*

Men and brethren—fellow-travellers, if not by the same road, certainly to the same judgment-seat, there to be tried by the same rule, "the word that Jesus has spoken to us"; * are you prepared to stake your immortal souls, and the souls of those who trust to you, "on this *perhaps*—this *peradventure*?" Will you embark your all in a church that has tied about her own neck such a mill-stone as the doctrine we have spoken of? Will you build your hopes for eternity on the infallibility of a church that has formally committed herself to such a palpable delusion? Could there be a more demonstrative proof, not only of your church being fallible, but of her having actually fallen, than the fact of her having, in solemn council, decreed the doctrine of Intention? It is possible

* John xii. 48.

that the members of that council, who pronounced a curse upon all impugners of such a doctrine, could be the persons, or true successors of the persons, whom Jesus promised "to guide into all truth," and with whom he promised to be "always, even unto the end of the age?" Is it possible that the men who hold and teach such a doctrine, can, collectively, form that church which was to be "the pillar and ground of the truth?"

The subject might be pursued further; but time and space forbid. I must, therefore, conclude, and remain for the present,

Rev. Sirs, your obedient servant,

SAMUEL MINTON, Incumbent of St. Silas.

8, PEEL-STREET, PRINCE'S-PARK, LIVERPOOL,

Feb. 13, 1851.

LETTER II.

TO THE ROMAN CATHOLICS OF LIVERPOOL.

MEN AND BRETHREN, hearken: Albeit the appeal comes from one of those whom you have been accustomed to regard as the unscrupulous calumniators of your church. Here, at least, you need fear no misrepresentation; inasmuch as your own priests have one and all tacitly admitted the facts upon which it is grounded. You are perfectly aware, how well trained and practised they are in theological controversy, and how ready at all times to seize upon whatever they may think a mis-statement of the doctrines or practices of their church. Can you doubt, therefore, that, if there had been anything of the kind in the letter which I lately addressed to them, it would long ere this have been detected and exposed. Can any reason be assigned for not one of them having even attempted a reply, except that which at once suggests itself, namely, that there is no possible reply to make? No exception, I am sure, could be taken against the tone of it; for the most fastidious critic might safely be challenged to point out a harsh or uncourteous expression. Nor can it be pretended, that its subject-matter was of too little consequence to be worth noticing. For the objection therein made to a particular

doctrine of your Church—the doctrine of Intention, is one which, if valid, not only overthrows, indirectly, her claim to *infallibility*, (for if she has made one mistake, she may make a dozen,) but also *directly* strikes at the root of each and all of those props on which you are taught to rest your hopes for eternity. You rely upon sacraments, trust to priests, and appeal to popes, councils, and fathers. But sacraments, priests, popes, councils, and fathers are all things, the very existence of which, if the doctrine of Intention be true, must for ever remain a matter of utter uncertainty. Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, and all the host of supposed fathers, whose opinions form part of your rule of faith, may, for all you know, have been mere unbaptized heathen; for how can you be sure of the *intention* of the persons who baptized them? The Gregories, Bonifaces, Leos, with the whole line of supposed popes, whom you regard as the centre of your church's unity, if not the rock on which she is built, may have been mere unauthorized intruders, raised successively to the pontifical throne by the College of Cardinals, and themselves accepting it, *on the supposition* of their being duly ordained priests, because the *outward form* of ordination had been gone through, but being in reality simple laymen from want of the administrator's *intention* at some link of the chain between them and the Apostles. So the assemblies of Nice, Ephesus, Trent, &c., whose decisions you regard as infallible, *on the supposition* of their having been general councils composed of lawfully ordained bishops, may be no more entitled to your respect than an equal number of any other men in the world, meeting together to decide upon matters of faith: for how can you be sure, that they were individually real bishops at all, and consequently that they could collectively form a real council? Exactly on the same ground, Father A., Father B., or whoever may be the priest, to whom you immediately look for the all-essential rites of your church, may be not one atom more of a priest than yourself, and consequently have no more power to absolve you, than you have to absolve him. While even if he had the power of administering the various sacraments to you, it would be impossible for you to know whether he ever exercised it; inasmuch as whatever he might *appear* to do, the whole *benefit* of it absolutely depends upon his own secret intention. So that you may go on to the day of your death, not only building your faith on the authority of imaginary popes, imaginary councils, and imaginary fathers; but also building your personal hopes of salvation upon the grace of imaginary sacraments, administered by imaginary

priests. And yet you are taught, that *visibility* is essential to the Catholic Church !

The importance, therefore, of this question can scarcely be over-rated : seeing that it is inextricably intertwined round every branch of your whole system. I question if you could mention a single doctrine peculiar to your church, in which the theory of Intention is not directly or indirectly involved.—Papal supremacy ? Why, to know that the person, who may have possession of the Vatican at any given time, is a true Pope, you must know the intentions of hundreds of persons, who have been lying in their graves for ages.—The unity, visibility, catholicity, and authority of *the Church* ? Why, no human being can possible tell, whether himself, or any other given individual, is a member of the church at all. Nay the very existence even of an *outward* church can only be a matter of *faith*, unless you could *see* another person's *intentions*. And however confidently you may believe, on the strength of Christ's promise, that there always must be a church in the world ; there is no promise made that any particular person, whether priest or layman, shall belong to that church : so that it never can be a *visible* body even in its *external ecclesiastical* character. If you maintain, that it must be so ; then you give up the doctrine of Intention, and with it the infallibility of your church ; for intention *cannot* be visible.—Transubstantiation ? Why, how can you know, that you really eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood, at the celebration of the Lord's Supper ; unless you know, not only the intention of the officiating priest, but also the endless combination of intentions, that are essential to the validity of his orders ? But its bearing on all the sacraments is too obvious to require any enumeration of them.—Shall we then pass on to the Invocation of Saints, with the veneration of their images and relics ? Why, the men whose aid you invoke, and whose images or relics you venerate, may never even have been admitted into the church by baptism, or have partaken of any one of her ordinances.—Purgatory ? Why, the privilege of being admitted there at all depends upon your dying in communion with "the Church" through her *sacraments*, (which all require intention) and the length of time you have to remain there depends very much upon the *intention* of the priest, who says masses for you after your death.—In short, it meets you at every turn ; and reduces that entire ecclesiastical structure, which so charms you by its apparent grandeur and solidity, to "the baseless fabric of a vision."

Let me then appeal to you as men, who must each one "bear his own burden,"* and who must each one "render account to God for himself,"† however any church or any priest may pretend to relieve you of the burden, and to give account for you. If there be, lying at the very root of your religious system, a doctrine so plainly decreed by the authority of your church, that not one of your priests can venture to deny it, and yet so manifestly absurd, nay so suicidal, in its nature, that not one of them dare utter a word in defence or even in palliation of it, for fear of drawing upon it too large a measure of public attention—is it not high time for you to awake out of your slumber; to gather up your strength for the mental effort of looking your church full in the face, and seeing what she is made of? Summon to your aid, if only for one honest steady glance, the intellectual faculties God has given you, and see whether she will bear looking at either by the light of reason or revelation. Look to your foundations, and see whether your house, firm and compact as it appears, may not be built upon a quicksand. "I speak as to wise men, judge ye yourselves what I say;"‡ and judge what your priests say, if they should venture to say anything. Ask them, whether you are, or are not, bound by the decrees of the Council of Trent? Ask them, whether that council did, or did not, decree the doctrine of Intention? Ask them, whether they do, or do not, believe it themselves? Ask them, whether such a doctrine, does or does not, render it impossible for either themselves or you to know that they are true priests at all; and, consequently, that they have any claim upon your submission, or any power to benefit you by their ordinances? Ask them, whether such a doctrine does, or does not, give them the power (supposing them to be true priests) of conveying the grace of a sacrament to one person, and withholding it from another, while precisely the same outward form is administered to them both, and perhaps at the same moment? Ask them, whether this does, or does not, give one man such an absolute, irresistible, irresponsible, power over other men, as can find no parallel elsewhere in this fallen world? Ask them, whether they can, or can not, produce a solitary text out of the whole Bible, which even appears to sanction such a doctrine? Ask them, whether a person regenerated in baptism is, or is not, according to this doctrine, regenerated *by the intention*

* Gal. vi. 5. Romish Version. † Rom. xiv. 12. Romish Version.
‡ 1 Cor. x. 15. Romish Version.

of the baptizer? and then ask them, whether St. John did, or did not, say, that the children of God are "born *not of the will of man?*"* Ask them, whether it is, or is not, written in the Word of God, that "cursed be the man that trusteth in man?"† and then ask them whether it is, or is not, "trusting in man," to depend upon the *intention* of a priest for regeneration, absolution, or any other spiritual blessing? Ask them, whether the ministration of the *word* depends upon the minister's intention for its efficacy; and if not, why should the ministration of a *sacrament*? And, lastly, ask them, if an explanation of all this can be given, why they do not come forward like men, and give it; or, if none can be given, how they can expect you to repose in the bosom of a church, which presents such a hopeless mass of confusion, which is involved in such self-evident contradictions, which has committed herself in such palpable delusions, and which can offer nothing to the anxious enquirer after salvation, but a complicated tissue of peradventures, and uncertainties, and doubts; laying him indeed a prostrate slave at the foot of her priesthood, by assuring him that there is no salvation to be obtained *except from them*; but unable to give him the slightest assurance at the commencement of his career, that he will really be able to obtain it from them, and equally unable, at the close of his career, to assure him that he has actually obtained it?

Now, if your priests can give you such answers to these questions as will enable you to "satisfy every one that asketh you a reason of that hope which is in you;"‡ then you will only be the more intelligent members of your church, and the more confirmed in your attachment to her, for having thus closely scrutinized her claims. But if they altogether fail to do so; then beware of letting them lull you to sleep again, on the ground of her presumed infallibility. They may tell you that your part is not to examine or investigate, but to bow to her decisions with the same unquestioning submission that you would render to those of God himself. They may tell you that, as the Church of Rome claims to be infallible, while the Church of England acknowledges herself to be fallible, Rome must be the safer guide of the two. But did it never occur to you, that the very determination, with which she so constantly asserts this claim, has, at least, a very suspicious appearance? Which should you think the most likely to be an honest and trustworthy

* John i. 13. Romish Version. † Jer. xvii. 5. Romish Version.
‡ 1 Pet. iii. 15. Romish Version.

guide,—the one who puts into your hand a complete chart of the road, and bids you narrowly examine it, that you may see whether he is leading you right ; or the one who seems so desperately afraid of your looking about you, or asking a single question, that he is for ever threatening not to lead you another step, unless you keep your eyes shut, and trust to his infallible guidance ? Depend upon it, my dear friends, this is the secret of your church's claim to infallibility. She knows that without it she would not have a leg to stand upon. She knows that if you once begin to look her in the face, and bring her doctrines to the test of God's Word, it is all over. She knows that if you once begin to suspect she *may* be wrong, you will very soon find out she *is* wrong,—fatally, fundamentally wrong. No wonder she should tell you that it is a sin to doubt. No wonder your priests should tell you not to trouble your head about such a thing as the doctrine of Intention. No wonder they should be so fearful of your aspiring to the honour which distinguished the Bereans of old, because they “received the Word with all eagerness, daily searching the Scriptures, whether these things were so.”*

But are you willing to be debarred from this honour ? Are you willing to be robbed of this privilege ? If not, arise in the strength of the Lord, and gird yourselves for the work. Quit you like men ; be strong. “Try your ownelves, whether ye be in the faith”† once delivered to the saints ; or whether ye be involved in the great apostacy from that faith ? “Prove your ownelves.” “Search the Scriptures,”‡ with earnest prayer for the Spirit's guidance. “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God.”§ Try *your church*, whether she be of God. And if you find her not to be so, but, on the contrary, to be “making void the commandment of God for her tradition, teaching doctrines and commandments of men,”|| whether those men be popes, councils, or fathers ; if you find her “hating the light, and coming not to the light, that her works may not be reprov'd ;”¶ if you find that her desire to suppress the testimony of Scripture evidently arises from her knowledge of the fact, “that it does not prophecy good concerning her, but evil ;” if you find her to be the development of that “mystery of iniquity,” which was

*Acts xvii. 11. Romish Version. †2 Cor. xiii. 5. Romish Version.

‡ John v. 33. Romish Version. § 1 John iv. 1. Romish Version.

|| Matt. xv. 6, 9. Romish Version. ¶ John iii. 20. Romish Version.

“already working”* in the very life-time of the Apostles, and which, therefore, must, *in its germ*, be almost as ancient as Christianity itself; if you find her portrait in all its leading features drawn to the very life on the page of prophecy; if you find her history too recorded there, in its rise, progress, and final doom; then, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” the warning voice of the Spirit of God, which waxes louder and louder, as the time of its fulfilment draws nigh, “Go out from her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.”†

With earnest prayer, that the Spirit of God may guide us into all truth,

I beg to remain,

Your sincere friend,

SAMUEL MINTON.

21, DAULBY-STREET, LIVERPOOL,

April 26th, 1851.

LETTER III.

“He was glad that the eyes of the public were now opened with regard to most of the doctrines of their religion. Open straightforward declaration was now the proper course for them, and he had no doubt that they would make satisfactory progress.”‡

Report of Cardinal Wiseman's last sermon.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE “LIVERPOOL STANDARD.”

SIR,—The editor of the paper‡ in which my letter to the Roman Catholic Priests of Liverpool first appeared, has reminded me of an omission in it; namely, that no allusion is made to the “political” bearings of the doctrine of Intention. This omission may perhaps be supplied by the following remarks—

* 1 Thess. ii. 7. Romish Version. † Rev. xviii. 4. Romish Version.

‡ “Liverpool Mail.”

Rome's spiritual power, as every one knows, is the result of her combined priestly and sacramental system. No grace without a sacrament, and no sacrament without a priest. Here is complete machinery for an absolute ecclesiastical despotism. Through this spiritual power, as every one also knows, or ought to know, she acquires indirectly an immense amount of temporal power, against which every civil government, Roman Catholic no less than Protestant, has always had to struggle for its very existence. But how is the struggle to be maintained? The only way of delivering the Roman Catholic laity from the tyranny of their priests, would be to make the administration of the sacraments compulsory by law, unless just cause could be shown in any particular instance for withholding it. This is the case as regards the Church of England. None of our laity can be deprived of a sacrament at the mere will of their minister; and therefore ecclesiastical tyranny is impossible. Rome appears to have foreseen that her power might at any time be thus checked by any State that was not too fond of the *name* of civil and religious liberty to prevent the *thing* being destroyed by its most inveterate foe; and therefore, with the wisdom of the serpent, she has most skilfully guarded herself from any such assault.

Take an illustration or two.—From a published speech of the Rev. Dr. M'Neile's, entitled, "The Papal Anti-christ," I extract the following paragraph; in a note to which the letters alluded to are given at length:—"The circumstance concerning Mr. and Mrs. Galway was this. Mrs. Galway was so unwell that she was confined to her room. Christmas came; at which time they think it important that all the members of their church should enjoy the rites of the church. Mr. Galway called the priest to have the rites of the church for his lady, which he (the priest) refused. On being asked the reason of this refusal, the priest pleaded the orders of his bishop, that he should not do it. Mr. Galway wrote a letter to the bishop (Dr. Abraham), but the bishop returned him no answer. Mr. Galway wrote a second letter to the bishop, and to this he got no answer; and then Mr. Galway published both of these letters, with his name attached to them, in a newspaper, showing that the ground—the only ground—for this interdict by the bishop was, that Mr. Galway presumed to maintain his *political* independence." This occurrence took place at Waterford, in Ireland, about fifteen years ago.

Still later history informs us of a priest assembling a number of Roman Catholic parents at the door of a

Ragged-school, and threatening to withhold the rites of the church from any of them who did not at once remove their children from that school. This priest, it may be observed in passing, is reported afterwards, not only to have spoken strongly in favour of *civil and religious liberty*, but also to have abused, in no measured terms, the clergyman, under whose superintendence the school is placed, for admitting children into it *against the will of their parents!!!*

Thirdly; within the last week a letter appeared in the columns of a London newspaper, from the Rector of Castlebar, county Mayo, detailing a brutal outrage which has just been perpetrated there, in consequence of a priest cursing from his altar the Protestant Scripture-reader, and threatening not to perform mass, or give them any other service on the following Sunday, if he (the Scripture-reader) was not driven out of the parish before that time. A day or two afterwards, thirty armed ruffians broke into the house where the poor man lodged, in the middle of the night, cruelly ill-treated the inmates, almost destroyed their little property, and would undoubtedly have murdered the special object of their attack, had he not been providentially detained that evening in a neighbouring town. Nor was it without considerable difficulty and delay, that the owner of the house could afterwards obtain any redress or protection from the Roman Catholic authorities of the place. Had Cardinal Wiseman heard of this occurrence, when, in his last sermon, he said, that conversions to Popery "must, humanly speaking, be the result of the working of the mind itself, of thought, reflection, inward conviction, and a careful examination of what was passing around. Humanly speaking, he repeated; for it was the grace of God, and that alone, which made converts to the Catholic religion. They were astonished at the strange visitations, the irresistible calls which compelled men to come to the church. It was heart-rending at times to see the struggles through which the convert had to pass. Catholics well knew, that they trusted far more for the conversion of any one, or for the conversion of a multitude, to the power of prayer, than to any amount of controversy, of lecturing, preaching, writing, or persuasion." Oh, this gentle, meek, charitable, loving, Church! Oh, this ill-used, misrepresented, calumniated, oppressed victim of Protestant tyranny! Pity it, comfort it! Cherish it! Never mind its "speaking as a dragon" in Castlebar; *we* don't live there. See how "like a lamb" it is in England!

But what has all this to do with the doctrine of Inten-

tion? Everything. Suppose the British Parliament, in order to secure to all British subjects that beautiful "civil and religious liberty," had passed such a law as we have hinted at, rendering the administration of sacraments, whether Romish or Protestant, compulsory. And suppose, in any of the above cases, the persons threatened with the deprivation of them, had taken refuge behind the law, practically asserted their civil and religious liberty, and set their priest at defiance. Suppose Mr. Galway had said, I *will* maintain my political independence; suppose the parents of those poor children had said, We will *not* debar our children from the blessings of education; suppose the Irish peasants had said, We will *not* persecute an innocent man, just to please your reverence—what would the priest have done? Why he would have preached a sermon the very next Sunday on the doctrine of Intention (however difficult it might be to find a text), and after making them distinctly understand that the *outward form* of a sacrament is nothing without the priest's *intention*, he would have reminded them, that however human laws may compel the one, they could not very easily compel the other; and that, therefore, if they were not satisfied with empty forms, but really wanted the rites of *the church*, they had better take care and "*hear the church.*" It might be curious to contrast the different phraseology in which this would be put at Castlebar, and at St. George's, Southwark; but practically, the same effect would, no doubt, be produced upon the minds (and correspondently to the various duties required from them, *upon the conduct*) of the respective auditories.

Oh! those good old fathers of Trent knew right well what they were about, in decreeing the doctrine of Intention. They were not weak enough to commit their infallible church to such a self-evident absurdity for nothing. Was it not the very screw wanting to make the machinery perfect? Could anything have been devised by the wit of man, to rivet more firmly the chains of priestly usurpation; to enable Rome to laugh at kings or parliaments; to bid defiance to any attempt at restraining her power, and to crush every vestige of "civil and religious liberty?" Why, if the Emperor of Russia, or the Sultan of Constantinople himself, were a sincere Romanist, he would be but a helpless prostrate slave at the foot of his confessor. The confessor perhaps might not wish to risk his life by refusing his majesty *the outward form* of absolution, or of the eucharist; but he would take care at the same time that his majesty thoroughly understood the doctrine of

Intention. It would be quite unnecessary to make special allusion to it on any particular occasion. The confessor need only instil into his mind, as a general principle, that *the church* confers her favours on none but *obedient* children. Surely the words of Jeremiah must have been meant to reach farther than the false prophets and false priests of his own day, when "moved by the Holy Ghost," he cried—"The prophets prophecy falsely, *and the priests bear rule by their means*; and my people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?"*

How to meet this dangerous foe in this its *political* character I leave for politicians to discover. To see that, if we admit a barrel of gunpowder into our house, it will inevitably explode and blow us to atoms—is no reason why we should resign ourselves to our fate, and admit it; but, on the contrary, is the strongest possible reason, why we should strain every nerve to *prevent* its admission; or, if already admitted, *to get rid of it*. How that can be accomplished is another question. But we have got over by far the greatest part of the difficulty, when we have persuaded people to open their eyes, *and see what the danger really is!*

If the above remarks shall have this effect upon a single person, it will be a matter of thankfulness to,

Sir, your obedient servant,

SAMUEL MINTON.

8, PEEL-STREET, PRINCE'S-PARK, LIVERPOOL.

Feb. 17, 1851.

* Jer. v. 30.

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A STRIKING proof of the horror, entertained by Romish Priests, of any allusion to the Doctrine of Intention, is afforded by the following extract from p. 108, of *their own Report* of the Carlow Discussion:—

“MR. POPE—*With respect to the validity of orders in the Church of Rome, how can the Rev. Gentlemen prove their ordination to be valid? The efficacy of their Sacraments depends upon the intention of the administrator! I ask the Rev. Gentlemen, how could they enter into the heart of the Bishop, who ordained them, and learn whether the intention was there?*”

“MR. CLOWRY (Romish Priest) *rose and said, that such was not the doctrine of the Church of Rome; it might have been the private opinion of some of her divines.*”

Only imagine how completely stunned Mr. Clowry must have been by the bare mention of that fatal doctrine, when in the confusion of the moment, he could publicly assert that it was not the doctrine of his Church; although the Council of Trent, to whose decrees he was sworn, pronounces an anathema upon all who shall deny it. A very little reflection, however, seems to have shown him what a mistake he had made; for he subsequently explained his meaning to be, “that there is no definition of faith in the Catholic Church, regarding the *nature* of the intention necessary for the valid administration of the Sacraments. Whether that intention must be internal or external, is a free opinion among theologians. The opinion of the necessity of the internal intention alone, could support his argument.” Now, without stopping to enquire what can possibly be meant by an *external intention*, or what is the *nature* of the intention, decreed to be necessary by the Council of Trent—the passage, quoted from the Romish Missal, in the first of the foregoing letters, indisputably proves it to be such an intention, as *can only be known to the person himself*, which is all that is necessary to support either Mr. Pope’s argument, or our own. All the disquisitions, therefore, which Romish Divines indulge in, as to the *kind* of intention required, can answer no possible purpose to a Protestant, except to throw dust in his eyes, and divert his attention from the only really important point—that *an intention* is required.

Another proof of the impossibility of putting even a plausible face upon the matter, may be gathered from a popular Roman Catholic work, called “A Papist Misrepresented and Represented.” The writer goes through the various doctrines of Popery in succession; showing, under each head, how grievously Romanism is misunderstood, and what a very passable, respectable, quiet sort of thing it is, when viewed in a proper light. But although *every other* Romish doctrine, I believe, is mentioned in its turn, not the most distant hint is given, from beginning to end, of the existence even of the Doctrine of Intention.

One of the very few attempts made to defend it, is a Tract entitled, “Absurd Protestant opinions on the Doctrine of Intention;”

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in which the writer endeavours to show—not, as might have been expected, the absurdity of Protestants supposing that Romanists could hold such a doctrine, but—the absurdity of denying it. The sole ground, on which he rests his argument, is, that otherwise you must admit a mere mockery of a Sacrament to be a true Sacrament. This, however, is a mistake; because we hold, that intention is necessary,—not on the part of the *administrator*, but—on the part of the *recipient*. A man who goes to the Lord's table with a *right* intention, receives the full benefit of the ordinance, however defective may be the *minister's* intention. While a man who goes with a *wrong* intention, receives no benefit, however *perfect* may be the *minister's* intention. This shows the soundness of Bishop Burnet's distinction, that an open mockery of a Sacrament is not a true Sacrament, but that a concealed mockery of one *is* a true Sacrament. Because, if a man *knew* that a certain ceremony was only performed in mockery of a Sacrament, he could not join in it *with a right intention*. But if he were deceived, and *thought* he was going to a true Sacrament, it would *be* a true Sacrament *to him*, because his *intention* would be right, and the moral effect produced upon his mind would be just the same as if the minister's intentions had been the best possible. Yet a large portion of the Tract in question is occupied with ridiculing this almost self-evident view of the matter: and the writer hints at its close, that to receive the Romish view, is a “mark of superior enlightenment”!

Nor is this all. For, after quoting, throughout the whole of his tract, *one solitary text of Scripture*, (which, as far as it bears at all upon the question, is *directly against* the Doctrine of Intention,) he concludes with accusing those, who deny it, of want of “respect for Scriptural teaching”!!—The text alluded to is Ezek. iii. 18. “When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.” But to be of any service to his argument, it should have run—“When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou *givest* him warning, and *speakest* to warn the wicked from his wicked way, [*but not with the intention*] to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity.” Whatever loss the man might suffer from the prophet's fault, resulted from the defectiveness—not of his intention, but—of his *act*. If the prophet had *given* the warning, it would have been just as likely to take effect upon the person warned, whether he *intended* it to take effect or not. The prophet's intention could neither make it take effect, nor prevent it taking effect; for, in the very next verse, it is implied, that the prophet *might* warn him, and yet the man *not* turn from his wicked way. So that, instead of favouring the doctrine of Intention, this passage inferentially militates strongly against it; by giving rise to the enquiry, If intention be not necessary to the efficacy of the *word*, why should it be necessary to the efficacy of a sacrament?—Yet to refuse our assent to a doctrine, in support of which this is the *only* text ever mentioned, proves us destitute of “respect for Scriptural teaching”!!!

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