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The Pope has addressed a letter to three of his Cardinals, in which he expresses his desire that the resources of the Vatican Library should be available for the vindication of "the truth." This is one of the greatest of the world's Libraries, and why it should have been kept closed to the historian so long is one of the secrets of the Roman curia. It is not certain that the concession now granted with a flourish of trumpets will prove of much value. The object indicated by the letter is to enable the historian to prove from authentic documents that the rule of the Roman Pontiffs is not "an obstacle to the welfare and greatness of Italy." But the task of thus educating the rising generation of Italian patriots is not to be thrown open, as it were, to public competition. Words of deep import faithfully reflect the policy of the Holy See: "We do not doubt, Beloved Sons, that the weight of your office and the reputation of your merits will secure the co-operation of learned men skilled in historical writing, to each of whom you will be able to assign the task best suited to his abilities, and in accordance with certain rules which we have sanctioned." When the historian has thus been carefully selected and "sanctioned" by the Pope and his Cardinals, who will doubt his impartiality in the work of defending the Church! Is it still true that the historian needs his patron?

Were it not for the grand assumption that the Church is the fountain of all good and must be defended, the Pope's letter might be taken by many as a sign of progress. Some of his maxims and sentiments are elevated. He recommends that—"Strenuous efforts should be made to refute all falsehoods and untrue statements by ascending to the fountain heads of information, keeping vividly in mind that 'the first law of history is to dread uttering falsehood; the next, not to fear stating the truth; lastly, that the historian's writings should be open to no suspicion of partiality or of animosity.'" Sound doctrine, the reader will assuredly admit. But it is immediately followed by that which contains a double meaning and cannot meet with the same general assent: "Manuals are also needed for the use of schools, which, while leaving truth intact, shall put aside all that is harmful to youth." The word "harmful" might be construed to mean anything which deprecated the "Temporal Power"; and here we should expect the "sanctioned" historian to write according to his cue, bringing into the foreground the documents which established 'the truth' of that bulwark of the Church. In the early ages of the Church, *anti-Christian* writings were unscrupulously destroyed, and Libraries burned with the connivance of Christian Bishops. If the Vatican contained the works of Celsus as well as the reply of Origen, if it included the volumes of the Serapion, the learned and sceptical world might well await with breathless anxiety the opening wide its doors. Still it no doubt contains priceless treasures peculiar to itself, and the questions arise,—why should these have been concealed, or be now surrounded with restrictions suggestive of timidity?

There was no good reason why the evidence taken last session before the Select Committee in support of the Education petitions should not have been published. The evidence, it is true, was mostly on one side, and hostile to the established system of public instruction. The fear on the part of the supporters of the system was that *ex parte* evidence would be likely to bias the public mind. The rule of judicial procedure, however, does not hold good here, for the reason that the public is not deprived of evidence and facts on the other side, but is supplied with all that enables it to form a correct judgment continually. The working of the system is in itself the best evidence in its favour. Besides, it is a great advantage to have the case of the other side disclosed. Its own strength and weakness are equally revealed, and everyone now knows what the Roman and the Anglican hierarchy want, with the reasons they are able to advance. The political candidature of Bishop Moran of Dunedin made it evident that the secular system had more friends than enemies. The alliance of Rome and Canterbury in a Parliamentary paper has made it well nigh impossible for public money to be filtered through the fingers of the priests under any elementary scheme of education, *if* busybodies are only prevented from pulling down the fabric piecemeal in order to satisfy their fads. But there is an indispensable condition to the maintenance of the system, and that is the political education and earnestness of the people. At present *they* hold the fort, and have only to recognise a mitred head as the common enemy, to make the position impregnable.

In the Criminal Code Bill introduced last session in the General Assembly, Blasphemy is thus dealt with: "Whether any particular published matter is or is not a blasphemous libel is a question of fact—But no one is guilty of publishing a blasphemous libel for expressing in good faith and in decent language, or attempting to establish by arguments used in good faith and conveyed in decent language, any opinion whatever upon any religious subject." As the Bill will probably become law at no distant date, Freethinkers should consider whether it contains any restriction on liberty. The definition of Blasphemy reduces the offence to a question of taste, and unless an *arbiter elegantiarum* be set up to decide what is and what is not permissible, it is quite within the bounds of probability that successful prosecutions might follow. Suppose we were to say, what Freethinkers believe there is good historical ground for maintaining, that Jehovah was merely the tribal god of the Jews, as mythical as Baal, Chemosh, Bel, and the rest of them, an orthodox jury might find the language "indecent" and blasphemous. The Rev. Joseph Cook of Boston would certainly have no scruple in applying either adjective. Yet in our view it would only be a fair and moderate expression of opinion on a question of historical evidence. But supposing the extreme case of a Foote caricaturing Christian mythology, even then we can see no criminal offence. Majorities and minorities ought to have the same rights, and while there is no