

DENOMINATIONAL JOURNALS.—CONTROVERSY.

(Contributed.)

MANY Catholics, I believe, dislike to see any attempt made to establish a Catholic paper. They argue that as these papers provoke religious controversy they must of necessity breed ill will among various religious bodies, and set Protestants against Catholics. Many Protestants argue in the same way. Now, it is quite true that all controversy, whether the subject be religious, historical, political, or even scientific, may become so warm as to breed ill will among those who engage in it. But how is truth in many cases to be established except by controversy? Like every good thing controversy may be carried to excess and be abused. Is this any fair argument against its use, its fair and temperate use? As regards religion, how are the many unhappy existing divisions among Christians ever to be healed unless the grounds of their various conflicting creeds be thoroughly examined? Our blessed Lord himself engaged in controversy, so did His apostles and the early fathers of the Christian Church. They did so in a spirit of meekness and charity. We may and ought to do the same, and not cry down all controversy and all publications which engage in it and encourage it. I hope the NEW ZEALAND TABLET will engage in controversy, and that while so engaged it will never transgress the great law of charity.

A CONTRAST.—FATHER MATHEW AND LUTHER AS REFORMERS.

(A Contributor.)

THE personal character of the above two celebrated men was as widely different as the nature and the fruit of their labors. Father Mathew was a model of purity, modesty, meekness, and charity. In the words of Mr Gladstone, "he shewed forth in deed and truth the beauty of holiness, and presented to his fellow creatures much of the image of our blessed Saviour." Luther, on the other hand, was, at least after he became a rebel against the authority of the Catholic Church, a prey to violent lust; he tells us so himself. He held the most loose and accommodating views on the subject of marriage, and expressed himself on that subject in language too gross to be repeated. In fact, he held polygamy to be an "open question." By the way, I have heard of an Anglican clergyman in this colony who shared in Luther's sentiments in that respect. Luther was, moreover, in the habit of using towards his opponents language the most violent, foul, and disgusting, such as could only emanate from the lips of one whose heart was full of hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, and which not even the alleged barbarism of his times could palliate, far less justify. Father Mathew did not introduce any novelties into the Christian religion. Luther did; novelties tending to strike, and which have struck, at the root of all constituted authority, and even of Christian faith and morals. Father Mathew's labors led to a widespread, to an amazing improvement of the morals of the people. Numerous testimonies in support of this assertion could be adduced, testimonies of the highest and most unimpeachable character. Miss Edgeworth, the celebrated novelist, for example, speaking of his work as a reformer of public morals, says—"It is amazing, and proves the power of moral and religious influence and motive beyond any other example on record in history." What was the effect of Luther's work on public morals? Fortunately we have his own testimony and the testimony of his accomplices on that point. Well, may we adopt the language of Miss Edgeworth, and say "it was amazing." Public morality previous to the so-called Lutheran Reformation was low enough, but after that change—after Luther and his friends had "emancipated" the people from those restraints which the Catholic faith and discipline had hitherto imposed on their evil passions to a greater or less extent—then the flood-gates of iniquity were opened wide, and the pretended reformers themselves, like Judas Iscariot, were appalled at the awful work of their own hands. Christendom became another Sodom—England more especially. The work of Luther led to all those plots, treasons, and revolutions which have filled, and are still filling, Christendom with war since his day. If any of your Protestant readers think I have done an injustice to Luther's memory, I hope you will allow them to show how. The devil, poor fellow, ought to have his due, and should not be painted blacker than he is.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM ON FROUDE AND THE IRISH QUESTION.

THE Archbishop of Tuam, in the course of a letter of his, lately published, says:—Whatever might have been the opinion of the American people of former times regarding the relations between Ireland and England, there is no further room for ignorance or apology on the subject, especially after Father Burke's triumphant refutation of the calumnies of the notorious panegyrist of Cromwell—in England a regicide, and in Ireland the truculent murderer of the people. Had the eloquent Dominican not been in America at the time, the mendacious historian might have been able to impose on some of the honest natives by misrepresenting the people of Ireland as an inferior race, deservedly subjected to the dominion of England. But his romances soon gave way to the stern realities of truth; the exposure by Father Burke—frauds, perfidies, treacheries, and wanton cruelties—opened the eyes of the American people, to the delusive picture of Froude; so that he hastened to quit the country which he sought to mislead by his slanders, and leave Father Burke and historical justice in possession of the field. But, instead of dwelling on these exploded calumnies, I need but turn the attention of the American people to the scenes which they are daily witnessing for our justification. Are not the multitudes that are continually flying from our shores and landing on the American coasts standing evidence of the injustice and oppression with which our people are still treated? If Ireland felt the fostering care which the American Government bestows on providing for the happiness of its subjects, our people would not be obliged to leave their own country.

HISTORY OF OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

By the Abbé J. E. DARRAS.

(Translated from the French for the NEW ZEALAND TABLET.)

19.—SUSPICIONS OF JOSEPH. VIRGINAL NUPTIALS.

MARY had returned to Nazareth. The delay consequent on espousals had expired; the epoch of the solemn nuptials drew near. "Now as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Wherefore Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately; but while he thought on these things, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the Prophet, saying:—"Behold a Virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, *God with us*. 1. And Joseph rising up from sleep did as the Angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took unto him his wife." 2. The terrible anxiety of Joseph forms, with the serenity of Mary in this circumstance, a contrast, which Origen made use of victoriously against the odious calumnies of Celsus. The Mosaic law was formal. To the tribunal of the priests belonged the judgment of the woman convicted of crime; the sentence suffered no modification; the example of Susanna affords us a sufficient proof of its rigor. The punishment of stoning to death awaited the spouse or the betrothed convicted of crime. This leading fact cannot be too strongly insisted upon; it presents in itself alone a complete demonstration of the veracity of the Gospel. Joseph attacked in his honor, pursued by the most cruel suspicions, is a witness whose testimony we can in no wise be permitted to suspect. His very character is moreover another guarantee. He is "just," says the Evangelist; that is to say, that he joins to the feeling of rectitude and honor, a tender, compassionate moderation. He has calculated the import of a solemn denunciation before the sacerdotal tribunal—the Jewish Sanhedrim. The rigor of the legal punishment which will follow on his complaint, is repugnant to his mild disposition. Yet on the other hand, he cannot consent to what he deems a personal dishonor. He will not have Mary for his spouse. Before two witnesses he will remit to her a document of separation, and the young girl who has received his pledged vow, will not have to reproach him for causing her an infamous death. This document of separation is legal, at the same time that it secures, without compromising anyone, the life of a woman, and the honor of a spouse. Such was the situation in which Joseph found himself, the delicacy and danger of which have perhaps never been equalled in any history. Mary, nevertheless is silent. Silence envelopes her virginal maternity with a divine veil. No human voice whispered in the ear of Joseph in the midst of these harrowing thoughts; and yet Joseph became the spouse of Mary. This marriage, the Jews have never denied. Celsus himself—and the rationalists of our day may trust him—Celsus recognised that Joseph had solemnly espoused Mary. Consequently, we may say with Origen, "That which Joseph did not learn from man, God Himself revealed to him; the secret which the Immaculate Virgin kept, even at the peril of her life, was deposited by the Angel of the Annunciation in the bosom of Joseph." Suppress the miracle of the evangelical revelation, and you will fall in with the miraculous consent of the "just Joseph," who, all of a sudden quells his anxieties, his suspicions,—still more, shuts his eyes to the light of evidence, and takes Mary for his spouse. It is thus the course of the Gospel narrative is shielded from the attacks of incredulity, defying all the efforts of rationalism, and commanding faith by its divine simplicity. The following lines will afford us a new proof of this truth.

§ V.—THE CENSUS OF THE EMPIRE.

20.—GENERAL OBJECTIONS RAISED BY THE RATIONALISTS.

"And it came to pass, says St. Luke, that in those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrenius the governor of Syria."—"And all went to be enrolled, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child." 3. Each word of this evangelical text has reference to questions of leading import. Universal history, particular details of the administration of provinces; Roman law viewed in connection with Jewish law; problems the most complicated and various in their kind, are solved in these few lines, without the slightest perceptible hesitation. Unless the Evangelist was addressing himself to the still living memories of a contemporary generation, and speaking of notorious realities, that each one had seen, heard, and felt, he could not have touched thus lightly on facts of so much importance. This intrinsic character of authenticity does not strike our modern rationalists. St. Luke, they say, mentions an universal enrolling directed by Augustus, at the epoch of the birth of Jesus Christ. Now, no known historian has recorded it. Then the Gospel has not spoken the truth. Such is the syllogism of Strauss, adopted by M. M. d'Eichthal, Salvador, &c. Their words deserve to be quoted in full, because they have obtained, in these latter times, a more noted publicity. "The texts, they say, from which it has been attempted to prove that some of the regulations in reference to the census, ordained by Augustus, must have extended to the dominions of the Herods, either do not mean what their words convey, or are the production of Christian writers, who have borrowed this idea from the Gospel of Luke." 4. This is the objection; no one can say that the thesis is obscure, or the positions badly defined.

(1.) Isa. vii, 14.

(2.) Matth. i. 18-24.

(3.) Luc. ii. 1-3.

(4.) Vie de Jesus, page 20, note.