

ST. PETER'S ROMAN EPISCOPATE

DEAN BURKE AND BISHOP NEVILL

In the 'Otago Daily Times' of Monday appears the following additional letter on the above subject from the Very Rev. Dean Burke in reply to his Lordship Bishop Nevill:—

'Sir,—Allow me to reply to Bishop Nevill's latest productions. The reply to his arguments will not prove a difficult matter; but to reduce to order a chaos—running through two and a-half columns of your paper—of words, complicated sentences, and dislocated paragraphs seems a formidable task. I shall try to manage it.

'1. His Depreciation of Modern Scholars.—He cavalierly brushes aside the conclusions of writers who have devoted much time to the investigation of this and cognate subjects. They were able men—experts in the matter in hand;—but their testimony, apparently, has little value in the eyes of Bishop Nevill, whose information is, I strongly suspect, confined to what he derives from the shilling shocker of the lovely Littledale. The layman who, despising the learned opinions of his lawyer or doctor, would follow his own devices, should have, I opine, a fool for his client or patient. I should observe here that I quoted Protestant historians only—persons quite naturally opposed to the Papal claims. If Catholic experts were quoted by Bishop Nevill against me I should feel rather uncomfortable, I fancy. If I attempted to waive them off it would be with a trembling—not with a majestic—movement of the hand.

'2. He Shirks the Giving of Proof.—In his now famous sermon he set about showing the Roman episcopate of St. Peter to be "a figment." He pretended to allege "evidence" to establish his thesis. He has since been challenged and asked to produce some clear, positive evidence calculated to upset a cause in firm possession. He refuses to produce it! He complains that I have asked him for "a mass" of positive evidence. Well, if his contention were true, evidence—protests, denials, indignant rejections—would be found scattered over the pages of Church history. But I was generous with him. I asked him to bring forward any positive evidence whatever—any protest made during the first thousand years of the Church's history by one obscure heretic, rejected and excommunicated by the Popes. He has since written three times to your paper, but no evidence appeared! He says he is not bound to prove a negative! But his negative is a mighty positive—"a figment" (i.e., "a fabrication, a story invented, a fable," "Encyc. Dict.")—a false claim, "upon which," he says himself, "the most stupendous issues are made to hang"—a false claim constantly asserting and proclaiming itself. Why not allege the decrees of synods, of angry bishops flouting it. But no;

There it is in Calm, Immemorial Possession, with all its prescriptive rights. In logic, law, and common sense, on the principles of historical investigation, only strong, positive argument can shake such a claim.

'3. Rather Queer Evidence.—Notwithstanding his protests, the Bishop feels all this, and so he makes a supreme effort to quote from early councils, with the following results:—(a) There was a meeting of the Apostles about the year 51 at Jerusalem; when there had been much disputing Peter, the chief of the Apostolic College, rising up, spoke; then Barnabas and Paul spoke; finally the "insignificant James" said "ego krino," "my judgment or decided opinion (on the matter) is," etc. (Bishop Bloomfield in loco); therefore, according to Bishop Nevill, Peter was never Bishop of Rome! (b) Some 20 canons were drawn up at this Council of Nice (A.D. 325), presided over by Hosius, Bishop of Corduba, and by Vitus and Vincent, the legates of Pope Sylvester. I have before me in Greek and Latin, the sixth canon of this council. An extraordinary translation and modification of this canon, made at Bishopsgrove, Dunedin, on September 3, 1903, puts Rome, of course, in an inferior place. Remembering the place and time of the production of the revised canon, you, Sir, will be able to appreciate the conclusion: Therefore, Peter was never Bishop of Rome; it's all a figment! So it is when he sets about it, that his Lordship alleges clear, certain, convincing evidence—all with "exhaustive effect." If, dear reader, you feel convinced of Bishop Nevill's point by this much positive argument, it is your own fault. I pity you, but I cannot help you.

'4. St. Irenaeus and Bishop Lightfoot.—Bishop Nevill falls back for the fifth or sixth time upon his denial as to that Irenaeus ditch and those parallel columns. Yet my references are there before him; "littera scripta manet"—the written letter remains. Lightfoot exposed his little game in the matter of Irenaeus. I quoted Lightfoot word for word as he wrote, whilst he was

stating facts and referring to "all the authorities." Bishop Nevill complains that I did not quote a suspicion or little personal inclination of his, expressed at the close of the note! What are Lightfoot's personal inclinations to me? When he has no reason to give for them they are no more in my estimation than Bishop Nevill's inclinations as to "the figment . . . of St. Peter having been Bishop of Rome."

'5.—Inquiry into a Murder Case.—His Lordship follows the lovely Littledale, using almost his very words, when he "murders" St. Cyprian. I told you, Sir, before that I strongly suspected his information was derived—though he assured us it was very extensive—mostly from occasional dips into "the useful little books" of that charming writer. The lovely Littledale wants "expressly" a quotation from Cyprian like this: "St. Peter was Bishop of Rome." His Lordship wants some passage in which Cyprian "directly affirms any residence of Peter at Rome at all." Littledale and the Bishop should know that indirect reference to a fact, provided it be unmistakable, is often stronger than a direct, express statement, because it implies that

The Fact is Commonly Known

and stands uncontradicted. An indirect statement clearly assuming that St. Peter had been Bishop of Rome—a fact of deepest interest to all Christians, and one which many would have denied in those early times if it were possible to do so—is the best proof of the point.

'Let us take a few such statements from Cyprian. Referring to some troublesome parties who were going to Rome to try and deceive the Pope, he says: "Yet after all this they dare not set sail and to carry letters from schismatic and profane persons and to the Chair of Peter and to the principal (or ruling) Church, whence episcopal unity has taken its rise, not reflecting that those to whom they went were Romans—whose faith was proclaimed as worthy of praise by the apostle—to whom perfidy cannot have access."—(Ep. 59.) Rather Romish after that! The Roman Church the Chair of Peter! The principal (or ruling) Church! the source and centre of sacerdotal—i.e., episcopal—unity! the Church to which perfidy cannot have access! Hence we can understand what Cyprian meant when he said that "Cornelius (the then ruling Pope) was made Bishop . . . when the place of Fabian (his predecessor)—that is, when the place of Peter and the dignity of the sacerdotal chair—was vacant . . . when the tyrant (Decius, the Emperor) would hear with more patience and equanimity that a rival prince rose against him than that a rival priest (the Pope) was constituted at Rome." Hence we can understand what Cyprian meant when he told Cornelius that he had sent letters to the bishops of his province telling them of Cornelius's election. "In order that all our colleagues may firmly acknowledge and hold your communion—that is, the unity and

The Charity of the Catholic Church."

'The practice of Cyprian was of a piece with his doctrine. He knew nothing of the independent bishop theory so dear to Dr. Pusey and to the Anglican Puseyite school. He earnestly requested Pope Stephen to depose Marcian, Bishop of Arles, in distant Gaul, who was infected with the Novatian heresy, and to get another appointed in his place. He sent to the Pope the Acts of the Councils of Africa and the Decrees against the "lapsi." Do Anglican bishops when they assemble periodically at Lambeth send their decrees to Rome for approval? St. Cyprian knew simply nothing of our independent bishop. It is a wretched twisting of his words—the effort made by Dr. Pusey and by Bright and Puller, in our day, to make him appear to do so. Cyprian "redivivus" would prove a terror amongst the independent bishops of the present day;—Cyprian, who put down abuses in subordinate bishops with an iron hand, who excommunicated such as defied his authority, and threatened with like measures those who refused to accept the terms laid down by him—as, for instance, in the case of the "lapsi." Indeed, he was often accused of overstraining authority; hence, in exculpation, he used words now twisted into a meaning contrary to his doctrine and practice. Hence "Some of the most brilliant German Protestant writers, such as Neander and Harnack, and, amongst Americans, Schaff, maintain

That Cyprian's Teaching

necessarily issued in the Papal and Roman form of Church government."—(Rivington's Prim. Ch., p. 48.) "Cyprian looked upon the Roman Church," says the Protestant historian, Neander, "as really the Cathedra Petri—(Chair of Peter),—and as the representative of the outward unity of the Church."—(Vol. 1, p. 299.)

'6. A Small Proposal.—I agree with his Lordship that short extracts do not always give a grasp of the author's meaning. Hence, I would, in all respect, submit this proposal to him: Let him bear half the cost, I shall gladly bear the other half of printing and circulating gratis St. Cyprian's treatise on "The Unity of the Church"—a work very suited to our time—together with