

'STAND FAST IN THE FAITH'

(A Weekly Instruction specially written for the N.Z. TABLET by GHIMEL.)

THE CHURCH'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

It is often taught and more often insinuated by Protestant lecturers that the Church has no love for the Sacred Scriptures (she really fears the light), that the Popes have never done much to encourage the study of the Bible, and that the Popes in particular who lived just before the Reformation came to dispel the darkness (same old darkness) of the Middle Ages were the vigilant enemies of God's Word. Serious charges, these; but lightly made and made too often with a total disregard of the solemn command found in the first pages of the Sacred Book itself: 'Thou shalt not bear false witness.' Let us take up the twice-told tale and get at some of the facts.

(1) The art of printing was invented by a Catholic, John Von Gutenberg, about the year 1440.

(2) The first book printed was printed largely with the help of the Archbishop of Mainz.

(3) 'The first book sent out by the press was the Latin Bible. No book was more frequently printed' (so writes Schaff, a great Protestant authority). Latin was naturally chosen because that language was then the ordinary means of instruction and communication. It occupied the same place in religious life that French now occupies in the diplomatic world, and that German until recent events was fast acquiring in the scientific world.

(4) Printing came in about the year 1440 and the Protestant revolt was in train, let us say, by 1500 (to give it a very early date). In other words, Protestantism was simply not in existence during this period of 60 years; the Pope and his bishops could go on their way, jealously and tyrannically keeping the Bible out of the hands of their flocks, lest they should learn too much. Well, what happened? Let me quote some non-Catholic historians. Professor W. F. Moulton, a scholar of note and one of the revisers of the Protestant Revised Version of the New Testament, writes: 'Of the Latin Bible alone, as many as ninety-one editions had been issued before the close of the fifteenth century. Within twenty years of this date, i.e., 1455, the printing of Gutenberg's Bible, the invention had found a home in more than a hundred European cities; and by the end of the century more than a thousand presses were at work. The Continental presses, almost in the earliest years of their existence, teem with editions of the Bible in different languages. Before 1477, four editions of the German Bible had been given to the world; ten more were issued during the forty years which followed' (*History of the English Bible*). Moulton's estimate is below the mark, for there were one hundred and eleven Latin Bibles printed before the year 1500; but let it pass. Only note that these were not copies but editions of the Latin Bible, and an edition would easily run into anything up to a thousand copies. And we ask does all this activity look as if the Popes were fully determined not to let the people get hold of the Bible for, you know, Popes, especially Popes in those dark ages, have unlimited power, and are endowed with diabolical cunning.

Let me quote also the Anglican Dean Maitland, who deals with the hoary old story that Luther up to his twentieth year did not know of the very existence of the Bible, and that it was by chance he discovered one (chained up, of course) in 1503: 'To say nothing of parts of the Bible, or of books whose place is uncertain, we know of at least twenty different editions of the whole Latin Bible printed in Germany only, before Luther was born. These had issued from Augsburg, Strassburg, Cologne, Ulm, Mainz (two), Basle (four), Nuremberg (ten), and were dispersed through Germany. I repeat, before Luther was born; and I may add that before that event there was a printing-press at work in this very town of Erfurt, where, more than twenty years

after, he is said to have made his "discovery." And yet . . . we find a young man, who had received "a very liberal education," who "had made great proficiency in his studies at Magdeburg, Eisenach, and Erfurt, and who, nevertheless, did not know what a Bible was, simply because "the Bible was unknown in those days." (*Dark Ages*, p. 506.)

Another writer, Coppinger, informs us (giving dates and places) that before Luther was born (1483) fifty-eight editions of the Latin Bible alone had been printed, that before his famous discovery of the Bible one hundred and twenty-nine editions had been issued, and of these, thirty-eight editions belonged to Germany. Again we note that these were editions, not copies. Copies of the Bible must have been as numerous then, in proportion to the population, as German soldiers are to-day. Why, the British Museum alone now possesses twenty-seven Catholic editions of the Bible, published before Luther's translation (1522, 1534).

IRISH SYMPATHY FOR FRANCE

TOUCHING REPLY BY CARDINAL AMETTE.

During the visit of the Irish deputation to Paris, an address, on behalf of the A.O.H., was presented to his Eminence Cardinal Amette, by Mr. Joseph Devlin, M.P. The address, after referring to the ties of affection which had always existed between Ireland and France, went on to say:—

'After centuries of misunderstanding and of conflict military and diplomatic—between you and the British Empire, you and that Empire are now united in a great alliance for Justice and for Liberty. In the same way the concession which has been made to us by the Imperial Parliament of the right of self-government has reconciled the masses of our people to the masses of the people of the Empire. The Entente Cordiale between France and Great Britain sees also at the same hour the Entente Cordiale between Ireland and the British Empire. If then, we no longer look to France for our liberty, we do not forget for that reason the innumerable proofs of assistance and sympathy which she gave us in the past.

'By instinct and without hesitation we have felt that this war was imposed on France, perhaps the most pacific nation of the world, in the same spirit of cruel aggression and arrogance which inspired the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. We understood as promptly as any Frenchman that the success of this new invasion would be the annihilation of the independence and greatness of France as well as of the integrity of her soil; and as Nationalists we could not hesitate for a moment to give to France our most loyal help in safeguarding her nationality.'

His Eminence replied as follows: 'I am profoundly touched by your action, and by the noble sentiments you have expressed. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I venture to say this on behalf of all France, and especially on behalf of the Church in France, which I have the honor of representing in this capital. Ireland and France are united by sympathies which have existed for centuries which are indeed as ancient as their history. The reasons of this sympathy are easy to understand. First of all, there is a certain resemblance in character, in the chivalrous spirit, generosity, and bravery, which distinguish both countries. There is also, and above all, the identity of their religion. There is one thing which unites souls and nations more than a community of race or blood, more than a community of interests, and that is the community of beliefs which exists between you and us. You are Catholic Ireland and we are Catholic France—

The Eldest Daughter of the Church.

We like to recall that the Apostle who evangelised your country—St. Patrick—was born in our old Armorica, and that he was the disciple of two great French