

'Our Protestant Faith' and How it is Defended

Under the title of 'Our Protestant Faith,' our Presbyterian contemporary, the *Outlook*, is reprinting, for the edification and building up of its readers, a series of Sunday evening addresses which were delivered by the Rev. J. Stephens Roose, M.A., at the Presbyterian Church, Upper Tooting, England, and which have since been published in volume form. We have read the series so far as it has yet appeared; and so far as the references to Catholic doctrines and practices are concerned these addresses surpass, in point of shallowness, inaccuracy, and lack of first-hand and scholarly acquaintance with the subject, almost anything that we have ever read. It is amazing that an educated minister should preach or write such superficial stuff; and it is deplorable that honest and well-meaning Protestants, such as the *Outlook* and its readers must be presumed to be, should be 'built up' on such wishy-washy and even poisonous pabulum.

For these addresses are not merely unscholarly and inaccurate—they are characterised by the grossest and most shameless garbling and misquotation. As an illustration in point, let us take the address on 'The Open Bible' as it appears in the *Outlook* of July 1. At the outset we are met with the following 'gem of purest ray serene': 'If a Roman Catholic has a Bible in his house, and if he presumes to read it "without a license"—a thing very difficult to obtain, by the way,—the officers of the Roman Catholic Church will decline to pronounce the absolution of his sins until he has handed the dangerous Book, the Bible, to the priest in charge of the church which he usually attends. Thus a man who keeps or reads the Bible is regarded as a wrongdoer, and, as a rule, before Mother Church will receive him into her bosom once more, he will have to go through some prescribed form of penance.' Passing by this nonsensical and flagrant falsehood, we come upon the following shocking and disgraceful piece of garbling. 'A striking admission,' this preacher has the hardihood to say, 'is made by Cardinal Wiseman in his *Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church*. Speaking from his own experience of those who "have abandoned the Catholic Church and become members of some Protestant Communion," he says: "They all without exception give me but one argument. The history in every single case is simply this: that the individual by some chance or other, probably through the ministry of some pious person, became possessed of the Word of God, of the Bible." And he goes on to say that in reading it the reader finds nothing about transubstantiation or auricular confession, purgatory, or the worshipping of images, and that, having heard the arguments of the priest, the man still persists in reading the Bible, with the result that "he abandons the communion of the Church of Rome." This admission is a most damaging one to the position taken up by Rome in the matter. Romanists maintain that the Bible is the Word of God, that in the Bible they find the bases of their faith and doctrine; yet those who read the Bible for themselves are led to abandon the Church of Rome and give up, what they term, the holy Catholic faith!'

It will be noted that the foregoing plainly states or suggests the following ideas:—(1) That Cardinal Wiseman declared that he had had personal experience of numbers of cases in which Catholics had become Protestants; (2) that in the passage cited he is stating the results of his own personal experience, and is stating them as an ascertained fact; and (3) that Cardinal Wiseman knew and admitted that 'those who read the Bible for themselves are led to abandon the Church of Rome and to give up the Holy Catholic faith.' Every one of these three statements or insinuations is absolutely and utterly false. The truth is, as we shall show, (1) that Cardinal Wiseman never uttered a syllable to suggest that he was 'speaking from his own experience,' but expressly declared that he was giving the story as told in the very few books that have been written by those who have become converts to Protes-

tantism; (2) that in the passage quoted he was giving, not facts known to himself, but merely the alleged history of such 'conversions' as supplied in the books written by the 'converts'; and (3) that so far from saying or admitting that the reading of the Bible has caused many Catholics to become Protestants, his whole contention—which is developed at length on the very page from which this preacher's extract is taken—is that it was *not* the reading of the Bible, but a much more fundamental principle, which led the individual to Protestantism.

In order to establish our first two points it is only necessary to quote the words of Wiseman leading up to the passage partially cited by this reverend garbler. The passage occurs in the first of Wiseman's *Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church*, p. 19. We quote from p. 18 the sentences immediately preceding the mutilated extract given by the Tooting clergyman, from which Wiseman's meaning will be perfectly clear. After referring to the works written by men of talent and erudition who had become converts to the Catholic Church in recent years, he goes on to say: 'But I have also read similar works on the other side, purporting to give the grounds upon which several individuals have abandoned the Catholic Church, and become members of some Protestant communion. It is, indeed, very seldom that men of any considerable ability, or at all known to the public for their learning, have written such treatises; but, still, such as they are, they have been, in general, widely disseminated. It has been considered important to throw them, in a cheap form, among the public, and particularly among the lower orders, that they may see examples of conversion from the Catholic religion. Now, I have read many of these, and have noted that, instead of the rich variety of motives which have brought learned men to the Catholic Church, there is a sad meagreness of reasoning in them; indeed, that they all, without exception, give me but one argument. The history in every case is simply this.' Then follows the passage quoted in garbled form by the Presbyterian preacher. The italics in the foregoing are ours, and the sentences so marked indicate quite clearly that in what follows Wiseman is quoting in substance, though not in words, the story of these 'conversions' as given in the 'converts' own books. When he says, 'The history, in every case, is simply this,' he plainly means 'the history as given in the books—written by themselves—to which I have referred.' Even the passage cited by this English minister—if it had been correctly quoted—itsself contains sufficient to show that Wiseman was merely giving the story of such conversions as 'commonly expressed' by the converts themselves. We give the passage as it stands in Wiseman's work: 'The history, in every case, is simply this: that the individual—by some chance or other, probably through the ministry of some pious person—became possessed of the word of God, of the Bible; that he perused this Book; that he could not find in it transubstantiation or auricular confession; that he could not discover in it one word of purgatory, or of worshipping images. He perhaps goes to the priest, and tells him that he cannot find these doctrines in the Bible; his priest argues with him, and endeavors to convince him that he should shut up the book that is leading him astray; he perseveres, he abandons the communion of the Church of Rome—that is, as it is commonly expressed, the errors of that Church—and becomes a Protestant.' The italicised words—'as it is commonly expressed'—were deliberately and dishonestly omitted so as to fasten on Cardinal Wiseman a 'damaging admission' which he never made, and in order to put into the mouth of an honored dignitary of the Church the cheap and tawdry sentiments of a devotee of Exeter Hall.

(3) So far from admitting that 'those who read the Bible for themselves are led to abandon the Church of Rome,' Wiseman's whole contention is that it was *not* reading of the Bible at all that led the particular individuals referred to to Protestantism. We take up the quotation at the very point

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