

Eye Witness, Mr. Bagot gave Cavaliere Lampertico as his authority, but Father Thurston showed in the *Month* for March, 1912, on the authority of O. Brentari, the historian of Bassano, that the burning of the children was simply the result of a frightful accident, which happened to the processional Car, whereupon, as was the custom then, the Four Last Things were represented. The pageant caught fire, and sixteen children were accidentally burned to death.

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Mr. Bagot protested that his account of the matter was the true one; but he undertook to make further investigations, and if he found he could not substantiate the charge, to withdraw it. The promised investigations have now been completed; and, as a result, Mr. Bagot frankly retracts the charge he had made. Writing to the Editor of the *Month*, on June 30 of the present year he says: 'I much regret that a family bereavement, in consequence of which I have been unable to return to Italy until quite recently, has prevented me from fulfilling my promise to the effect that, should my investigations into the case of the children burned in a car representing purgatory, which was a feature of a procession in honor of the *Corpus Domini* that took place in a town in the Venetian State in the year 1705, prove me to have been incorrect or unjust in the account given by me of that incident in my book, *My Italian Year* (page 68), I would very gladly confess my error in the pages of the *Month*. My brother's (Sir Josceline Bagot) illness and death in March last unfortunately made it impossible for me to investigate personally the matter in dispute; but I asked two friends of mine—men of very different religious and political views—to proceed with those investigations for me during my long absence in England. One of these gentlemen is well known in Italy for his historical and political writings; while the other is an equally well known Italian ecclesiastic, a native of the Veneto, though now occupying a post in Rome. I have only recently been able to learn the result of their researches. It is a great satisfaction to me to be able to declare myself to have been completely in error in having attributed the tragedy in question to an act of religious frenzy, as I attributed it in *My Italian Year*. I think that it is proved, beyond any doubt, that the said lamentable occurrence was due to accident only, and not in any way to an outburst of fanatical superstition; and that the explanation of the affair published in the *Month*, refuting my account of it, is the true one.' Mr. Bagot adds that he has written to the editor of two Protestant papers which had quoted his account of the incident, to say that it was entirely erroneous, and to beg them to publish his disclaimer.

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Mr. Bagot deserves all possible credit for his candor and honesty; and by his frank and unreserved retraction he has done all that lay in his power to make amends for his fault. But the lie has got a clear two years' start; and hundreds, and possibly thousands, will have read (and believed) the original slander who will never see or hear of its withdrawal. The incident has quite a number of morals. First of all, as we have already indicated, it shows the extreme unwisdom of writers of fiction in dabbling in historical questions of which they have not made a special and personal study. In the second place, it teaches that readers should be very chary of accepting wild anti-Catholic stories and theories when advanced by popular writers, however sincere and well-intentioned these writers may be. And finally, it illustrates the usefulness and value of an alert Catholic press. It took the *Month* considerable time and trouble to get the authentic facts supplied from Italy; but in the complete and public withdrawal of an odious charge its labor and enterprise have found ample reward.

The Salt and Its Savor

'If the salt lose its savor,' said our Lord on a memorable occasion, 'wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out.' In the

world of Protestantism the plague of Modernism cannot be stayed, and amongst our separated brethren the salt of Christianity is on the sure way to lose its savor. We take three recent illustrations—from widely separated points of the compass—which give significant and painful evidence of the operation of the destructive and devitalising process. The first is from a case which received much prominence at the recent Methodist Conference in England. The Rev. George Jackson, regarded as one of the ablest of Methodist ministers, had been appointed president of Didsbury Theological College, an important institution for the education and training of students for the Methodist ministry. Before the appointment took effect, however, Mr. Jackson delivered the Fernley lecture, in which, in unmistakable terms, he intimated his disbelief in certain of the Old Testament miracles, and expressed his sympathy with the application of what are called modern critical methods to the authority and interpretation of the Scriptures. In a further explanation and vindication of his views, he said: 'When I am told that the Bible is, in a sense that belongs to no other book, the Word of God, I cannot receive the saying merely on the authority of another, not even of the Apostles, nor of Christ himself; for me it is God's Word only as I hear God speaking in it.' In other words, instead of subjecting himself to Scripture he claimed the right to subject Scripture to himself, and to his purely personal and subjective interpretation and apprehension of it. An attempt was made, in consequence of such utterances, to have his appointment cancelled; but the Conference, by the overwhelming majority of 600 to 15, decided to let the appointment stand, and to give the Modernist professor full scope to indoctrinate the coming generation of Methodist ministers with his own destructive and pernicious principles.

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The second illustration is from high Anglican authority in Australia. It is not often that an Anglican prelate steps aside, at an important gathering of his Church, to give his express and explicit blessing to Modernism; but that is what happened at the Congress of the Anglican Church of Australia held at Brisbane in the second week of September. The Most Rev. St. Clair Donaldson, D.D., Archbishop of Brisbane and Metropolitan of Queensland, was President of the Congress; and in his presidential address he dealt with some of the great world movements with which the Church would have to reckon in the future. This is what he said at the very outset of his address: 'And first let me forestall criticism by confessing that Modernism is not one of them. Modernism, as I understand the term, is not a movement at all, but a phase of human thought, great and important indeed, but not directly concerned with the field of action. Modernism is the twentieth century phase of an ever-present controversy, which is as old as Christianity itself. It is simply the spirit of inquiry which seeks in every generation to square what it has learnt of Christ with the developments of modern thought; and although this self-imposed task may take us in some respects beyond the ways of thinking to which we have been accustomed, yet the changes will not be different in kind from those through which past generations have come; and we whose experience has assured us of certain fundamental things are not to be lightly disturbed, but rather stimulated and helped as we step aside to watch the process.' Such an utterance, on such an occasion, is surely an unpleasant sign of the times.

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The third illustration concerns Modernism in its relation to the children—for even the hapless little ones are now being brought under its baneful influence. According to the Rev. A. A. Murray, Presbyterian minister of St. Andrew's, Auckland, Modernism, pure and unadulterated, is being openly taught in Protestant Sunday schools in America and elsewhere per medium of a volume known as the *Westminster-Graded Lessons*—a volume, by the way, which the Rev. F. E. Oxer, Moderator of the West Australian Assembly, has just enthusiastically recommended to his Church. This is what Dr. James M. Gray, Dean of the Moody Bible

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