

RELIGIOUS DEBATE

One of a Series of Articles Between N. W. Phelps and Frank Davey.

(By Frank Davey)

WHAT WILL THE OPEN MINDED INTELLIGENT PUBLIC SAY OF THE FLAGRANT INSINCERITY OF PREACHER PHELPS WHO PASSES OFF MY LETTER OF MARCH 14th WITH A FEW GLIB JIBES; when in that letter I proved to every sensible person that each statement and line of Phelps' original lecture, as reported in the Headlight was a falsehood, whole and entire: 1. e. (1) That "the average Catholic has to get written permission from the Hierarchy to read the Bible;" (2) that "The Roman Catholics do worship metal images for God;" (3) his insinuations about the celibacy of the Popes and the clergy; (4) that "the Catholic Hierarchy 'as a church' is active in politics;" (5) that "several of the presidents of the United States had been killed by Catholics;" (6) that former Governor Olcott was seen being initiated as a Knight of Columbus, etc. etc. Let the reader refer to the March 22nd copy of the Headlight and see if the calm, clear, logical presentation of facts therein can correctly be compared to a "busted toy balloon" as Phelps vulgarly puts it.

WHAT DOES THE FAIR-MINDED PUBLIC THINK OF PHELPS' BOASTFUL REPETITION OF INEXHAUSTIBLE IRRELEVANT STATEMENTS STREWN AROUND IN HIS PREVIOUS ARTICLE WHICH HE DESIGNATES AS "UNANSWERABLE EVIDENCE?" Evidence of what? What if Al Smith is a Catholic; what if the Benedictines used to manufacture wine for public sale, etc. If illiteracy in so-called Catholic countries is due to the Catholic church, then illiteracy in our protestant southern states must also be due to the Protestant churches. It was not the Catholic laymen but Atheistic Masons of the Grand Orient lodge that persecuted the church in France, etc. etc. Does the fairminded public see in the reply to his questions anything that justifies Phelps in clinging stubbornly to the gross falsehoods of which I convicted him in my former letter? I did answer all his ravings at least in a general way. Does any sane person expect me or anyone else to take up every wild statement that he can copy out of the hundreds of disreputable sheets and books that are on the market, for revenue only? All that Phelps is doing is, parrot like to repeat these mendacities. If a man has been proven untruthful on ten, twenty or thirty counts, we naturally conclude that the rest of his "testimony" is of the same nature. Will not sensible people say "it is useless to argue with such a one." That is true so far as he is concerned. But for the sake of the public, it is well at least occasionally to expose quackery of his brand.

WHAT WILL REASONABLE PEOPLE THINK OF PHELPS' STATEMENT THAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH "GATHERED UP BIBLES (CATHOLIC) FROM THE CATHOLIC LAYMEN OF FRISCO," etc., in view of the fact that Catholic bibles are on sale every day of the year in various stores of that city and every other city of any size in the United States. He also wants to know why the Catholic church refuses to "operate Bible societies." One reason is that Christ never commanded anyone to go out into the whole world and scatter bibles. What He did say was preach to the gospel to every living creature, teaching them to observe all things, etc. St. Paul also clearly states that faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10-12) not by reading. The Catholic church both preaches and teaches the Bible. The Catholic church kept the sacred scriptures intact for over a thousand years before Protestantism originated. During that time, her monks and scholars wrote my hand the only copies available before the printing press was invented. Her very severity to movements which falsified the sacred texts and tried to palm off faulty vernacular translations, is a proof of her zeal rather than animosity. To understand the scope and reasons for these temporary restrictions, upon bible reading in the vernacular the circumstances under which they were given must be understood. See how during the late war, our government made all sorts of restrictions upon freedom of press and upon the freedom of speech, not to destroy these precious boons but precisely in order to preserve them. The temporary restrictions upon reading the Bible in the vernacular, were for the same purpose.

WHAT THEREFORE WILL THOSE TO WHOM HONESTY IS SACRED SAY ABOUT THIS PREACHER who having made the charge that the "average Catholic layman must get permission from the Hierarchy to read the Bible," clings stubbornly to this falsehood, in spite of a multiplicity of easily known present day facts such as (1) the bible is

found everywhere in Catholic homes. (2) The bible is old by millions in Catholic book stores. (3) Portions of it are read in public every Sunday in every Catholic church. (4) The Bible is the soul of every portion of Catholic liturgy and devotional exercises.

WHAT DO LOVERS OF FAIR PLAY THINK ABOUT PHELPS' RETENED QUOTATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL OF TRENT, GREGORY XVI, ETC. WHEN HE INVARIABLY FAILS TO SHOW WHERE THESE "QUOTATIONS" CAN BE FOUND? He evidently knows that for me or anyone else to selfprove that these are garbled, misconstrued, one must search through libraries to find them. Of course, he himself can easily give us Crowleys or Menaces as authorities, but the Father of Lies could probably give better proof of sincerity than can these. In "quoting" the Council of Trent in his disquisition dated January 18th Phelps represents the Council as limiting the "reading of the bible translated into the vulgar tongue." To suit his purpose, he later changes this to make it read: "The Council of Trent denied the right of anyone to read the Bible in any language," etc. Such dishonesty is typical of all these anti-Catholic "writers and lecturers."

WHAT MORE MONUMENTAL EXAMPLE OF TRICKERY COULD ONE MEET WITH THAN THIS: Because the Catholic church is opposed to having every individual interpret doubtful, difficult passages of scripture for himself or herself, therefore according to the impression given by Phelps Catholics are not allowed to read the bible. He dishonestly distorts in pretending to quote me. "Bible reading, he (Davey) says, would make each one a pope." These are Phelps' words not mine. What I said was that the Protestant system, according to which each one is supposed to be enlightened by the Holy Ghost in his personal interpretation of scripture—that this makes a pope of each one, since light to understand the scriptures correctly—this is about all we claim for the pope. Phelps also says: "Gregory makes it plain that no Catholic layman should dare to read and interpret the bible for himself," etc. Note 'read and interpret'. On this very subject of difficulty of correctly interpreting scripture, St. Peter (1-3-16) says of the Epistles of St. Paul "in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest as they do also other scriptures unto their own destruction." The United States government has not yet come to that stage where she permits every John or Jane to interpret the laws or the constitution for themselves. For this she has her supreme court. If a Catholic wishes to do this in regard to the Bible, he is physically free but he must politely step out of the church and join those who justify the words of the Apostles: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears. (11 Tim. 4-3).

DID YOU EVER HEAR A BLACKER FALSEHOOD THAN THIS? "It was 400 years after the invention of printing before a copy of the bible was printed in Rome; this was in Greek," when even prior to 1520 (Luther's excommunication) about twenty editions of the bible had been printed in Italian. Whether they were actually printed in Rome, I do not know, but they certainly were in the language of and accessible to the people of Rome, yet Phelps has the audacious mendacity to say that "as late as 1879 no bible had been printed in Rome in the language of the people." The facts are these: Before the first Protestant version appeared, there were 84 printed editions of Holy Writ in the ancient languages; in the modern languages there were issued 198 editions of which 104 were of the entire bible, comprising 20 in 2 in Spanish, 8 in Bohemian, 1 in Italian, 26 in French, 19 in Flemish, Slavonic, and 30 in German, and 94 of single portions of Holy Writ, consisting chiefly of copies of the New Testament and the Psalms. These had been issued from the press with the sanction and at the instance of the church, in countries which she reigned supreme, before Luther's German version of the bible appeared in 1534.

WHAT DO RELIGIOUS MINDED PEOPLE THINK OF PHELPS' BLASPHEMOUS RIBALDRY CONCERNING THE HOLY ELCHARIST? The doctrine of the real presence is not only held in honor by four hundred millions of Catholics and members of the Greek Orthodox church but by millions of Episcopalians, many Lutherans and others. Even Protestants who disbelieve this ancient doctrine usually have enough respect for sacred things to refrain from ridiculing and blaspheming it. In his former "unanswerable argument" Phelps had implied that the priest kept the bible from the people

in order to be able to drink all the wine in the Mass. When the grotesqueness of this was exposed by the fact that only one, two or three tablespoonfuls of wine are used in each Mass, he resorted to foolish jokes to cloak his dishonesty. Because an individual may have taken intoxicating liquor in addition to the few drops at Mass, this hardly proves that the Catholic church kept the bible away from the people so that the laity might not find out that they are entitled to some of the wine in the Mass. The withholding of sacramental wine from the laity involved no change in the doctrines of the church, as anyone who knows these doctrines can testify. It was merely a change of discipline. While it is true that the Catholic church never reverses her official interpretations of Christ teaching in matters of faith and morals, her policy, discipline and customs are reformable, subject to revision; of course I do not expect Phelps to see the difference.

WHAT DO THOSE WHO STILL RESPECT THE HOLY SCRIPTURE SAY OF A PREACHER WHO PRETENDS THAT WHEN THE BIBLE SAYS "BLACK" IT MEANS "WHITE?" Such impiety is implicitly contained in Phelps' statement: "Of course, Mr. Davey does not intend us to think that Christ drank or made fermented wine." All history proves

that the Jews at the time of Christ drank wine. The Bible says that Christ made and used wine. St. Paul goes so far as to tell Timothy to use a little wine for his stomach's sake. (1 Tim. 5:23.) As for total abstinence such organizations as the Knights of Father Matthew (who was a priest) were preaching and trying to get men to practice absolute prohibition half a century before the 18th amendment was enacted. The fact that the Catholic church has not seen fit to change what she believes to be the divine ordinance of Christ, by substituting grape juice for wine is taken by Phelps as another "evidence" that "Rome and rum walk together."

HOW WILL SINCERE PERSONS FEEL ABOUT THIS PREACHER'S STATISTICS "that 55 per cent of the men who are fighting this Amendment in congress were Roman Catholics." They will laugh, smile or be angry at his low estimate of their intelligence. What does he mean by "in Congress?" Can it be that Phelps can not figure any better than he can tell the truth? Out of over 425 members of congress, only approximately 30 are Catholics even in name. Whence the 55 per cent? But if by "in Congress" Phelps means out of congress, then it would be interesting to learn how he was able to figure out this percentage so accurately. The "authorities" he

quotes are as usual wild, idiotic statements, whose absurd falsity is self-evident.

CAN THE PUBLIC SEE THE DIFFERENCE? Phelps again brings up infallibility, this time he "quotes" from Strossmayer. Now these quotations from Strossmayer may or may not be fictitious. I do not know or care. I do know that this man was at first an opponent of papal infallibility but I also know that various forged documents were imputed to him. I know likewise that later on, he repeatedly proclaimed his submission to the Pope, as in his pastoral letter of Feb. 23, 1881 expressing his deep devotion to the Apostolic See. Whenever Phelps speaks of the Catholic doctrine of the infallibility of the church through her head, the Pope, he always displays crass ignorance. Let the words of the Episcopalians, Dr. Jos. Barry at a recent convention of the Episcopal clergy-men at Philadelphia explain his own view of the Pope's position in the head of the church. It resembles the Catholic doctrine very closely. Here are his words as reported in the press: "This is what it appears to me we can accept as the basis of reunion: First the primacy of St. Peter and of the bishops of Rome by divine right; second, a jurisdiction differing in extent at different times, but in all

cases allocated to the bishop of Rome by ecclesiastical law; third, an infallibility which is the mind of the church through the Pope as its organ of statement" etc.

WHAT DO TRUTH LOVING PEOPLE THINK OF AN ARGUMENT LIKE THIS: "Mr. Davey has failed thus far to secure that living witness who has been in a Protestant institution for 30 years who would come forward at the end and say 'all this time I worshipped images.'" For once Phelps spoke the truth, even though by these words he is trying to propagate a pernicious falsehood. Do you ever see Catholics using the printed or spoken word to slander, abuse their Protestant or non-Catholic brethren? Only rarely have they come out publicly even to defend themselves from unjust, unprovoked, outrageous assaults, and then only with calmness, dignity, moderation. Fair-minded persons who have heard or read our defense invariably contrast Catholic mildness and charity with the abuse, hatred, self-evident falsehood employed by our defamers. But such poisoned pabulum is constantly offered to the citizens of Oregon. For some unexplained reason, the chief propagators of this peculiar brand of "christian charity and patriotism" were and still are so-called ministers of Christ who strongly remind one of

the Master's words: "Beware of the prophets which come to you in clothing but inwardly they are voracious like wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits." (Matt. 7:15-16). The fruits have been hatred, falsehood, bitterness strife. For which we do not blame the other ministers; they are not accountable for the crimes of their renegade associates so long as they do not cooperate with or approve of them. Throughout we Catholics have been long suffering, but we have lately begun a mild, dignified defense of ourselves and our citizens. WHAT MUST DECENT REASONABLE PEOPLE THINK ABOUT BRAINLESS, SHAMELESS LIKES LIKE THESE: "We often see why Catholic laymen do not throw themselves into committees and for themselves what ungodly houses of shame a Nunnery is" if our Catholic people did not look from personal contact and experience who and what are the sainted and their institutions. In their thousands of Catholic mothers, (Protestant also) have lived under the same roof with these devoted who shared their confidence; knowers still know them most intimately.

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