

# ANTI-CATHOLIC HISTORY:

## HOW IT IS WRITTEN<sup>1</sup>

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ONE of the chief obstacles opposed to the defence of the Church in modern times is the supposed authority, each in his particular department, of those who attack the Church. This is especially true of Academic Authority, that is, of Authority which bases itself upon the supposed learning (and sincerity in teaching) of the universities.

A man with a high official position in the universities is naturally supposed to be well acquainted with his science, whatever it is, and to be honest in his exposition of its results. Only a very few men can enjoy such positions, and to the mass of readers their conclusions and affirmations seem almost necessarily true. When, therefore, a Catholic is met by the statement that Professor So-and-So has said this or that in Natural Science or in Philosophy, and especially in *History*, which plainly damages or contradicts our Catholic truth, the Catholic layman is inevitably disturbed. He can reply, "I am no expert in these matters, but my Faith tells me that the Church is right and therefore this man must be wrong." But such a reply is of little service against opponents who of course do not admit the premises,

<sup>1</sup> An examination of Prof. Bury's *A History of Freedom of Thought*, adapted from an article appearing in the *Dublin Review* for Jan. 1914.

and, what is more, it presupposes an attitude of mind which cannot always be guaranteed. The Catholic himself is disturbed in his own Faith by statements made with full Academic Authority and apparently destructive of that Faith.

This is more particularly the case to-day, because matters requiring expert knowledge and long study are being discussed in popular form, and affirmations based upon such study are being put forward in cheap books and pamphlets which circulate by the million.

Now it so happens that any particular zeal against the Catholic Church nearly always leads the zealous opponent thereof into bad errors of fact and statement, and this is more especially the case in the all-important department of History. But the average Catholic layman reading popular works upon history, most of which in the English tongue suffer from an anti-Catholic bias, is not equipped for the discovery of their errors. He can but imagine that statements proceeding from men of known official position at the universities are upon the whole true. It is important that he should learn to mistrust such false Authority, and to appreciate that not only is the opponent of the Catholic Church commonly guilty of error in his historical statements, but that the Academic Authority upon which he relies is unsound: that the writing and teaching of history in our Protestant universities consists largely in unverified repetition of current errors; that even the plain duty of accuracy in dates, names, and facts is considerably neglected—and all this because those very academic writers are so certain of their official position that they fear no external criticism. They think no one will be competent to expose them save their own colleagues.

I shall here take one typical example of this

kind of University work, and I think I shall be able to show the reader of what stuff it is composed, how very little reliance may be placed upon it, and what a proper contempt he may entertain for its supposed Authority.

The work which I shall take for my example unites in a high degree the various characters of such attacks upon our religion. It is called *A History of Freedom of Thought*, and its author is Professor Bury of Cambridge.

This *History of Freedom of Thought* is a little book issued at a shilling. It is issued, therefore, with the deliberate object of affecting a very wide and popular circle of readers. It is a book definitely intended for propaganda.

It forms part of a well-known series (The Home University Library: Williams & Norgate) whose whole intention consists in distributing the expert results of Academic study to the widest possible public. It is a series which has done invaluable work already in many departments of art and of science.

The book is written by one who holds the highest possible official position our universities can give. Professor Bury is the head of the School of History at the University of Cambridge. He is the official representative of Academic History in that one of our two great universities.

It is therefore no artificial choice which I am making. It is an excellent and typical example of the kind of thing we have to meet and expose which I am taking for the purpose of this tract.

I shall first of all show how strongly opposed to the Catholic Faith, in spirit and in diction, academic work of this kind is. In so doing, I cannot avoid perhaps shocking the piety of Catholic readers, for

some of the terms used by the author are frankly shocking to our piety, and are intended to be so. But I must quote the sentences in order to establish my case. Next, I shall show how inaccurate and unscholarly work of this kind can be.

The general thesis of the little book (it is less than 250 small pages of large print) is as follows: That reasonable inquiry upon the fate of the soul and the nature of things was common to Pagan antiquity: That there arose a maleficent institution, which we know by the name of the Catholic Church, and which institution was opposed to inquiry and to the use of reason in these matters: That this institution, gradually gaining ground in the so-called "conversion" of the Pagan world, extinguished the use of reason, compelled men to a blind acceptance of absurdities, and darkened the human mind, in Christian Europe at least, for something like a thousand years: That this disaster was alleviated towards the end of the Middle Ages by some stirrings of a renewed interest in truth: That during the last four hundred years, as the Power of the Church has been gradually weakened until it has almost disappeared, the human mind has recovered its native vigour and freedom, and has returned to the healthy use of reason in its inquiry into all the great and doubtful problems of philosophy.

There is nothing original about that thesis. It is the commonplace of all those who oppose the Catholic interpretation of history.

What I am concerned to show is, first, the strong spirit of animosity in which that thesis is presented, and next, the gross lack of accuracy and scholarship which vitiates or destroys all the supposed "Authority" of its exponent.

Here, then, are a few passages in which the anti-



Christian standpoint of this Academic Authority is particularly emphasized apart from historical statements. I would beg the reader to note them, for they are not unconnected with that violence in statement which leads such writers into their errors of fact as well as of doctrine.

Upon page 25 we have the conception of the creation of the Universe by Almighty God labelled "fantastic." Upon page 37 the difficulties of accepting at once a God and the existence of Evil are presented as insoluble. Upon page 40 we are requested to consider the Persons of the Blessed Trinity "with some eminent angels and saints discussing in a celestial smoke-room the alarming growth of unbelief in England, and then, by means of a telephonic apparatus, overhearing a dispute between a Freethinker and a parson." Upon page 50, to receive the "Kingdom of Heaven" "like a little child" is to "prostrate your intellect." Upon page 52 the Christian Millennium inaugurated by Constantine's Edict is one in which "reason was enchained and thought was enslaved." Upon pages 63 and 64 the doctrines of Sin, Hell, and the Last Judgment form "a solid rampart against the advance of knowledge." And upon a preceding page the Faith defended by the Inquisition is "nonsense." Three pages later (67), we again get the refrain that in the most Christian centuries "reason was enchained in the prison which Christianity had built around the human mind." While upon page 72 the Faith becomes "a misty veil woven of credulity and infantile naiveté which hung over men's souls and protected them from understanding either themselves or their relation to the world." At the opening of Chapter VI. upon page 127, Christian theology is full of "incon-

sistencies, contradictions and absurdities," and upon page 137 another Authority quoted (a French Protestant by the way) "*shows* that the Christian dogmas are essentially unreasonable." Four pages further another person (this time a Cambridge don) "examines the chief miracles related in the Gospels and *shows* with great ability and shrewd common-sense that they are absurd." Upon page 156 the French Church was "a poisonous sewer" which the Deists or Atheists of the eighteenth century were right to attack. Upon page 160 Hume "*shows*" that the arguments "adduced for a personal God are untenable." Kant, upon page 175, is lectured for "letting God in at a back-door," and is told that he has failed. Upon page 181 Darwin "drives a nail into the coffin of Creation and the Fall of Man." Upon page 182 it is discovered that if any intelligence had to do with the designing of the world it must have been "an intelligence infinitely low." And just before the end of the book, upon page 249, we are re-assured that "Reason now holds a much stronger position than at the time when Christian theology led her captive."

And so forth—we all know the kind of thing. The eighteenth century was full of it, and much of it survives in our own day, especially with those of an older generation who are still among us. It is an inevitable accompaniment, of course, to such sentences that we have the Christian scheme described as "mythology"; that we hear of the "delusive conviction" of our Lord and His Apostles as to the approaching end of the world; that the Blessed Sacrament is "a savage rite of eating a dead god" (page 189). Conclusions of this kind and adjectives suitable to them abound in the little work, and I really need waste no more space in setting forth the

first point which I have promised to lay before my readers.

It will be admitted without any further labouring of the point that the Academic Authority I am dealing with is in *opposition*. He is a clear example of such Authority in action against the Catholic Church.

Well, let us next examine how far that Authority is genuine ; in other words, how far this Academic Authority is an Authority at all.

Authority in this connection obviously depends upon a presumption of scholarship. That is, the Academic personage is presumed from his very position to have had special opportunities for information, to have accumulated a great number of facts and conclusions inaccessible to the ordinary man from lack of leisure and training, *and to be putting forward these facts and conclusions with accuracy*. He has no other source of Authority. He does not pretend to revelation or to special inspiration. If it can be shown that he is not writing *good* history but *bad* history, then his presumed Authority disappears, and his opposition to the Church is of no more weight than that of any other ill-informed or inaccurate man.

Good history means accurate history, and accuracy in historical writings is of three kinds.

First, and least important perhaps, is the accuracy that can be tested by established books of reference, and more certainly by a comparison of the historian's work with the documents upon which it is admittedly founded ; accuracy in dates given, in the exact wording of quotations, and in all matters of that kind.

Errors in these may be mere slips of the pen or mere carelessness in proof reading, or, what is graver,

a lapse of memory. Even so, they vitiate history and mislead the reader.

But they may also be something more. These errors may, if they occur in sufficient number, or are of their nature presumably due to ignorance and not to neglect, or are made upon matters sufficiently grave or presumed to be of common knowledge to all expert historians, be proof of a fundamental lack of scholarship. They may show a book to be not only slipshod, but written without any sufficient preparation or knowledge.

In other words, we can cite such errors as a proof of thoroughly *bad* history according to—

(a) the number of such errors.

If I write a short account of Queen Victoria's reign with one hundred dates in it, and fifty of those dates are wrong, that is not mere carelessness. It is ignorance, and it is proof of my incapacity to write on the subject at all.

(b) The inherent probability of error.

For instance, if I find a man saying that Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1873, it is obviously a printer's error for 1837'; but if I find him saying that war broke out between France and Germany in April 1869, that is inexcusable. No man can write July so that it looks like April, or 1869 so that it looks like 1870, and it is exceedingly unlikely that he would write either the month or the year wrong by a mere slip of the pen. There is no subconscious action to account for such a mistake, and one can only put it down to ignorance.

(c) The grossness of the error.

One may excuse a man for not looking up some tiny point, or for having looked it up in some inaccurate book of reference; but there are certain great fixed dates in history which everybody ought



to know, certain main facts and names with which everybody should be acquainted, and when an historian goes hopelessly wrong on those, one has a right to give a loud cry. As, for instance, if a man mentioning the Boer War shows, even by a single allusion, that he thought the Boers were English-speaking, or black. Or again, if one writing on the Bible should show by a chance phrase that he thought it to be all by one hand.

Second, and of greater importance in the matter of accuracy and therefore of good history, is accuracy in *proportion*, that is in the relation of one statement to another.

Thus, if an historian describing the Boer War omits or makes little of the presence of a large element in the Cape sympathetic with the Boers, or tells us nothing of the widespread voluntary enlistment in England at the beginning of the struggle, or does not emphasize the loose formation and peculiar method of fighting of the enemy, he is, whether from bias or from ignorance, writing bad history. Every one of the facts stated may be perfectly accurate, and yet the truth may be hidden, or even reversed, in the process of telling. This kind of bad history is often to be discovered in the way in which an historian will pervert the meaning of a document by not mentioning or by not sufficiently emphasizing some one of its provisions. For instance, one might say of the great Reform Bill of 1832 that it destroyed the popular franchise in many towns, and was for long opposed by that great and typically national man, the Duke of Wellington. But to say only those two things about it would be to mislead the reader altogether, for the Duke of Wellington's opposition was personal, and later was withdrawn; and while popular fran-

chise was destroyed in some towns, the franchise as a whole was intended to be, and was, both more widely extended and based upon a more popular principle than it had been, being specially designed to include the new great towns of industry which had hitherto been excluded. Or again, a man might quote in great detail Mr. Gladstone's speeches and letters against Home Rule, casually adding at the end of his description, "later he greatly modified these views." Such an arrangement and proportion would be a thorough perversion of history.

Errors of this kind, errors in proportion and emphasis, proceed sometimes from bias; sometimes from not having read the original documents in their entirety; and sometimes from both. But it will generally be conceded that, when they occur frequently and affect the whole course of a narration, they destroy the historical authority of the narrator.

Third, and most important of all, is that kind of accuracy which may be called "accuracy in the spirit of the narration," that is accuracy as to the general atmosphere of an event.

This kind of accuracy is, of course, the real test of good history beyond all others. But it is much the most difficult both to define and to criticise, and where it is lacking one must exercise great care in choosing one's examples to show that it is lacking, for it is not a process available to the ordinary reader. The judgement can only be passed by one who has covered the same field of historical reading as has the writer whom he is examining.

Thus we cannot call an historian a bad historian of the Battle of Waterloo simply because he shows a great prejudice against the political aims of the allies and a great sympathy for the political aims

of Napoleon. But if his sympathies lead him to present the resistance of the British squares in Wellington's line to the French Cavalry charges as half-hearted and ill-disciplined, he is a bad historian. In order to write such bad history, it is not necessary that he should use false language at all or set down facts which are contrary to the truth. He has but to modify his adjectives somewhat, or even to ascribe, without himself vouching for it, certain motives and a certain mental attitude in his characters, to produce the desired effect, or to quote adverse opinion without quoting opinion in favour of the party he is attacking.

Now, if we take these three kinds of inaccuracy in their order and judge by them the historical value of Professor Bury's little book, we shall, I think, be surprised at the result.

To take the first kind of inaccuracy : inaccuracy in date and fact and quotation. I have said that the numbers, the inherent probability, and the grossness of error, are the three matters which in this connection we are chiefly concerned with, and I think my readers will agree, when I have run through certain examples of this kind of thing in Professor Bury's book, that they are not excusable upon any plea of mere fatigue or over-rapid work. There are too many of them, and many of them are too serious, for such a plea to hold.

Remember that I am quoting but a portion of these howlers, and only such as my own limited historical learning allows me to discover at a first reading. Remember, further, that I am taking them from no more than the first two hundred pages of the book, which bring us up to modern times. Those pages are short pages. The little essay is not a book of reference crammed with facts ; it is a piece of propaganda in which the facts stated are comparatively

few, and few also the names referred to (for instance, there is no mention of Abelard). Yet even upon so small a scale, and under such partial conditions of examination, the number of positive errors is startling. We have upon page 55 Spain given as the place of Priscillian's execution; it should, of course, be Treves.

Upon page 56 Simon de Montfort the elder is confused with his own son and called "the Englishman."

We have Lyons instead of Vienne given as the place of Servetus's imprisonment by the Inquisition before he got away to Geneva.

Legate and Whiteman, the English dissenters who were burned by the Anglicans in 1612, are set down as having suffered in 1611.

The Decree of the Holy Office in the matter of Galileo is put down to the month of February; it was given, as a fact, in March.

The statute *De Hæretico Comburendo* (p. 59) is put down to 1400; it should be 1401.

The statute of 1677 (same page) is put down to 1676—a year in which Parliament did not even meet!

Jeremy Taylor's *Liberty of Prophesying* is dated one year wrong.

Hume's *Dialogues on Natural Religion* were not published in 1776; there is an error of three years.

Collins, who died in 1729, is said to have "published" his *Discourse* in 1733 (page 141).

Shaftesbury's *Inquiry* appeared first, we are told, in 1699. As a fact, we first find it printed in 1711.

Voltaire, we are told on p. 153, did not begin his campaign against Christianity until after the middle of the eighteenth century. As a fact, the first work of Voltaire's to be publicly burnt for



attacking the Faith was so burnt in 1734. And so forth. . . .

One might go on indefinitely quoting errors of this kind, striking rather for their number in such few pages than for their individual importance, and it is conceivable that a defence might be put up for each: in the one case it is a printer's error; in another a slip of the pen; in a third a confusion between old style and new style—though that is hardly excusable. But with all the charity imaginable, and with the best will in the world to excuse the book as merely grossly careless, one cannot explain away by mere carelessness such enormities as a mistake of *twenty years* in the death of St. Augustine (page 55); a mistake of *nine years* (p. 107) in so well-known and fundamental a date as that of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

Perhaps the most amazing of this cataract of errors is the blunder about Robespierre upon page 113.

The main dates of the French Revolution are matters like the dates of the Battle of Hastings or the Battle of Waterloo. Everyone is supposed to know them who touches history at all, even in an elementary fashion. Robespierre's execution marks the end of the Terror and the end of all the first great active phase of the French Revolution. It took place at the end of July 1794, and the preparation and the celebration of the feast of the Supreme Being was in the month before. To put it down to April 1795 (as is done on this page 113) cannot be a mere slip, for the month is there to prove it. A man cannot write April for May or June, and in April 1795 Robespierre had been dead for nearly nine months.

I have said enough in this connection to show, without further examination of other errors of the

sort, that the book and its authority can be destroyed on this score alone. But there is an even stronger case when we turn to the second type of error, which I have called of graver importance, and in which we can show that Professor Bury either quotes documents that he has not read, or, having read them, deliberately misinterprets them by omission and by a lack of proportion in his statement.

Personally, I incline to think that the very numerous errors in this category are due to that common fault in our universities, the quoting of some modern statement about an original document which the writer will not be at the pains of looking up for himself.

Turn, for instance, to the statement upon page 57, that "The Inquisition was founded by Pope Gregory IX. about A.D. 1233." There is a sentence absolutely typical of the way in which this book has been written. It was not "about" some vague period or other, it was precisely in the year 1231, that Gregory IX. incorporated with ecclesiastical law the Imperial rescripts of eleven and seven years earlier. It is in that year that you get the phrase "*Inquisitores ab ecclesia*," etc. It is in the next year, 1232, that you find a Dominican with the title of Inquisitor. All that you get for the year 1233 is that it was the date when the system was established in France.

Turn next to a typical statement on p. 59. It is as follows:—

That the Statute for the Punishment of Heretics by burning, which was passed under Henry IV., was repealed (in) 1533; revived under Mary, and finally repealed under Charles II.

Now see what a brief statement of this sort made in a popular little book of history for general con-

sumption is intended to convey ! It is intended to convey that a cruel punishment was made law during the Catholic Middle Ages ; that it ceased to be law coincidentally with the first efforts of Henry VIII. against Rome, and with the year that was the year of definite breach with the Papacy. That when a Catholic sovereign came back in the person of Mary Tudor, this cruel punishment was revived and acted upon ; that finally, much later, England having become wholly Protestant and the Civil Wars having produced their effect, it was dropped.

Now the interesting point about this statement is, that though, as I have said, it contains material errors, the suggestion of historical falsehood is not dependent upon those errors. It is perfectly true that the old Statute was repealed under Henry VIII. just at the moment when he was breaking from Rome ; but what Professor Bury happens to leave out is the fact that *coincidentally with the repeal of the old Statute a new Statute (25 H. VIII. cap. 14) was passed which carefully re-erected the punishment of burning, and preserved it for the future.*

It may not be common knowledge with the popular audience to which Professor Bury addressed himself, but it is common knowledge to the average historical student, that heretics were burnt for their heresy steadily during the Protestant establishment : Butcher and Parre under Edward VI. ; Wielmacker and Woort and Hammond and others under Elizabeth. It is further common knowledge that many were condemned to be burnt who saved themselves by recanting, or were saved by deportation, or in some other fashion. The point is that a Statute for burning heretics was very vigorously alive, though it was a *renewed* Statute and not the original Statute of Henry IV. Professor Bury's statement, there-

fore, is as though one were to say of the English Poor Law: "Relief was provided for indigent people by Statute out of the rates under Queen Elizabeth. But the Statute was repealed in the first part of the 19th century." The actual statements would be true, but they would convey the exact opposite of the truth.

Upon page 65 we have an almost perfect example of this fashion in treating documents. Here are the words: "Chemistry (alchemy) was considered a diabolical art, and in 1317 was condemned by the Pope."

There is exactly the kind of thing repeated over and over again by men who do not take the trouble to look up the original documents. It is utterly inaccurate and fundamentally bad history, and one can be perfectly certain that Professor Bury has never so much as glanced at the original text. He might have discovered it in the second volume of the body of Canon law, the Lyons edition of 1779. It is a decretal issued to protect the public from fraud, and in particular from the fraud practised by those who pretended to make gold and silver out of baser metals. The decretal mentions the habit of such tricksters as stamped with the hall mark of gold and silver base metal resembling gold and silver, which base metal they passed off upon the ignorant, professing to have manufactured them in their furnaces. The Pope condemns those who have cheated in this fashion, not to many years penal servitude (as a modern Court condemned the other day a Frenchman who had similarly pretended that he could make large diamonds), but to the paying into his treasury of a fine in genuine gold and silver equivalent to the amount of fraudulent metal they had passed off on poor and ignorant people. There is not a word about alchemy as an art being con-



demned, let alone chemistry or any other form of research.

Now in this case I am perfectly certain that Professor Bury was acting in good faith, that is, repeating what he had read in other books without examination and without verifying his references. The worse historian he!

Here is yet another example of exactly the same kind of thing. We are told upon page 91 that "Alexander the Sixth inaugurated censorship of the Press by his Bull of the year 1501."

Alexander VI. did nothing of the kind, as Professor Bury would have known if he had looked up his original sources as an historian should. Alexander's Bull is a copy, word for word, of Innocent VIII.'s Bull of *four* years before, which in its turn was based upon action taken in the University of Cologne *eight* years earlier. Further, Alexander's Bull only applied to certain German bishoprics. The first universal censorship came fourteen years later, in 1515. That one little statement, then, covering but a line of type, contains a whole nest of inaccuracies, and of inaccuracies due to the fact that our historian does not know his materials.

You have the same sort of mistake upon page 94. The catechism of the Socinians is there ascribed to the influence of Fausto himself. It is just the kind of thing that looks as though it should be true; only, unfortunately, Fausto did not come into the movement until after the catechism had appeared.

Two pages later on you have another typical statement: that Charter of Charles II. given to Rhode Island in 1663 is mentioned as confirming the existing constitution of the place and securing to all citizens professing Christianity a full enjoyment of political rights. What really happened was that

Charles II. in sending his charter to Rhode Island repeated his own decision in favour of universal toleration. But the colonists were concerned with nothing save the insignificant quarrels of the innumerable Protestant sects; the King ultimately left it to the Assembly of Rhode Island to decide what it would do, and when that body issued its rules (printed in 1719) *they excluded Catholics*.

It is clear that in all these examples, which I have taken at random up and down the book, the writer is doing what we so continually find upon the part of academic authorities, particularly when they are indulging in an attack upon the Catholic Church—he is repeating what some other man of the same kind has said before him, and that other man is repeating something that was said before *him*. He has not been at the pains of consulting original authorities; and the result is valueless and inaccurate history, always wrong and sometimes the exact opposite of the truth.

When we come to the third and gravest kind of bad history, that in which the general atmosphere is falsified, we have, as I have said, a much harder task than in the case of errors in dates and facts, or of errors due to omission or ignorance of documents.

Nevertheless, the point is of such importance that it must be dealt with, and I think it will be found possible to show by fairly definite examples how thoroughly the thing he is attempting to describe has been misunderstood by the writer: how lacking he is in the preparation necessary to a grasp of his subject.

Let me take for my first example in this general matter of "atmosphere" Professor Bury's description of the mediæval attitude towards the marvellous, the miraculous, and evidence in general.

He appears to be persuaded that men in those times and places where the Catholic Faith was supreme had lost all sense of the value of evidence and of the nature of reason. He seems to have some vague confused picture in his mind of a besotted society in which men would believe pretty well anything they were told, and in which no inquiry could be made into the processes of the mind or the nature of witness and of truth.

Well, to begin with, if Professor Bury had done what I suppose no don at our universities ever does, that is, had read a few lines of St. Thomas in the original, he would have found the whole argument *against* miracles, the whole of the modern feeling which he himself shares, set out with perfect lucidity and with extraordinary terseness in the sixth article of the 105th question of the Summa. It is St. Thomas's habit always to put as fully as possible his opponent's case before he deals with it, and that in itself is a mediæval habit in argument which moderns have forgotten and would do well to copy.

But quite apart from his ignorance of this great text-book of the Middle Ages, the fixed idea that mediæval men in general were careless of philosophy is an astonishing piece of ignorance in which our author is evidently sunk.

For instance, almost at the outset of his little effort (on p. 16) we are told that a man in the Middle Ages hearing of the existence of a city called Constantinople, and hearing also that comets were portents signifying divine wrath, would not have been able to distinguish the nature of the evidence in the two cases! Now to say that is not so much to misunderstand the Middle Ages as to state something wildly and ridiculously false with

regard to them. If ever there was a time which pushed to excess the habit of definition and of clear deductive thinking, the establishment of intellectual categories and the difference between different orders of ideas, that time was without the faintest doubt the time between the great awakening of the twelfth century and the moral shipwreck of the sixteenth.

You are perfectly free to say that this habit of deductive reasoning was pushed to extremes in the Middle Ages: that men wasted their time upon metaphysical vanities when they should have been observing phenomena. That is what a good historian to whom the Middle Ages were antipathetic would advance. He would thus show at once that he knew what the Middle Ages were, and that he disapproved of them. But to say that the men of the Middle Ages could not distinguish between different kinds of intellectual authority, that they did not concern themselves with exact categories of thought, is exactly as though you were to say that Liverpool and Manchester to-day did not concern themselves with machinery or the production of material wealth. It is a false statement and bad history. That misstatement of the whole phase of our European past is perpetually cropping up in the book. I have only given one example of it; I might have given twenty.

It is in the same way bad general history to talk of "the profound conviction" that those who did not believe in the doctrines of the Church (page 52) were "damned eternally," and to continue (page 53) that "according to the humane doctrine of the Christians, infants who died unbaptized passed the rest of time in creeping on the floor of Hell."

It is bad history to write that, exactly as it would be bad history to say "The English Army in 1913



ought to have been stronger ; but then Englishmen were fools enough to believe that one jolly Englishman was worth ten foreigners." In both cases you are saying something for which you could easily quote popular or exaggerated contemporary matter, and in both cases you are saying something which shows you ignorant of your historical "atmosphere." The eminent men who preside at the War Office or over our Foreign Affairs, those who decide, rightly or wrongly, upon the balance of international forces known to them and with the whole European situation before them, what the military strength of Great Britain shall be, *these* are our authority, and *their* decision is the criterion of such things. *They* do not think or say "one jolly Englishman is worth ten furriners." Their calculation of military expenditure is not established upon that basis. Meanwhile, it may be true that an exaggeration of the national strength or an excessive credulity in the national good fortune may warp the judgement even of those eminent men. Anyone desiring to prove the truth of such bad history could quote hundreds of songs and speeches from the Tub in support of his contention. He could also probably quote many an erroneous statement proceeding from men in really high position. None the less his statement would be bad history.

It is precisely the same with regard to the Christian doctrine of eternal damnation, and particularly with regard to that most difficult of all discussions, the relation between Faith and Will. But the sentence, as Professor Bury puts it, is the opposite of the truth. The ultimate authority of the Church has never condemned all the unbaptized to eternal damnation. To say so is simply thoroughly bad history, and there is an end of it.

I will give a third example. The enormous efforts culminating in a great war directed against the Albigensians had, it may be presumed, some great historical cause. On page 56 we are told what this cause was: "The Church got far too little money out of this anti-clerical population." There is history for you!

That the loss of revenue excited a strong material interest is true enough, but to put it forward as the main cause of the Albigensian War is childish. It is as though some future historian, disliking the Manchester School of Economics, were to describe its intellectual triumph in the middle of the nineteenth century in England by saying that John Stuart Mill and Cobden, as well as Bright and Peel, were cunningly calculating the profits they could extort from the labouring poor. One does hear fantastic exaggerations or rather wild distortion of this kind on the lips of sincere but incapable fanatics; but to have them set down in what purports to be sober history, and from the pen of an historian, would be to render that history worthless and its author ridiculous.

I will give before concluding yet another instance of this major error of "atmosphere" which runs through the whole book. For the purpose of this last illustration let me choose the few lines upon St. Thomas upon page 69.

Every historian knows, or should know, what the place of St. Thomas is in history. You have in him one of the very few men who have acted as the tutors of the human race. The more you differ from or dislike the man or his doctrines, the more is it your business as an historian to appreciate his *scale*; for history, like all other forms of presentment, is a matter of proportion. St. Thomas gave

at once a summary, an expression, and a creative effort to all that is meant by the Christian intelligence, and it is plain historical sense to speak of him as one speaks of Aristotle, of St. Augustine, or of Bacon; just as it is plain common sense to call Russia or the German Empire a great power, whether one likes or dislikes their people or governments. It is mere bad history to say, as is here said upon page 69, that St. Thomas "constructed an ingenious" system of philosophy, and that "the Treatise of Thomas is more calculated to unsettle a believing mind than to quiet the scruples of a doubter."

It is not bad history because St. Thomas was not ingenious; it is not bad history because the gigantic rational force of St. Thomas is incapable of suggesting doubts; on the contrary, St. Thomas must, or may, like all powerful thinkers, have produced reactions against his own conclusions, and must and may, like all creative minds, have told lesser men as much of what they should not have as of what they should. No, to say that St. Thomas "constructed an ingenious system" is bad history because it is ludicrously inadequate. It is like describing Julius Cæsar as a bald-headed man who travelled and died prematurely; or Shakespeare as an English actor who flourished in the reign of James I.

So much, then, for examples of the false historical atmosphere running throughout this little essay.

It reaches its culmination, perhaps, in the astounding remark that (page 90) the retention of Galileo's works upon the Index until 1835 was, during the intervening centuries, "fatal to the study of natural science in Italy"; from which one might suppose that Professor Bury had never heard of Torricelli, let us say, of Volta, or of Galvani!

What are we to say in conclusion upon a book of this kind? I think no more than to repeat the opinion I set out at the beginning of these few pages: the supposed Academic Authority of those who attack the Catholic Church, as Professor Bury has attacked it, is usually valueless, because it is usually inaccurate and bad history. This book shows in a particularly clear light the kind of inaccurate and bad history which our universities are responsible for, and it is not an unfair example of that sort of pompous self-sufficiency in the modern academic onslaught upon the Church, which it is the business of every Catholic to mistrust, and I think of every sound historical critic to ridicule. If I may presume to counsel those who cannot make any special study of history, I would earnestly beg them to challenge the authority of any historical statement they hear which seems to conflict with their common sense or their Faith, and at their leisure to examine the original authorities upon which it is based, and which are now for the most part available to all.