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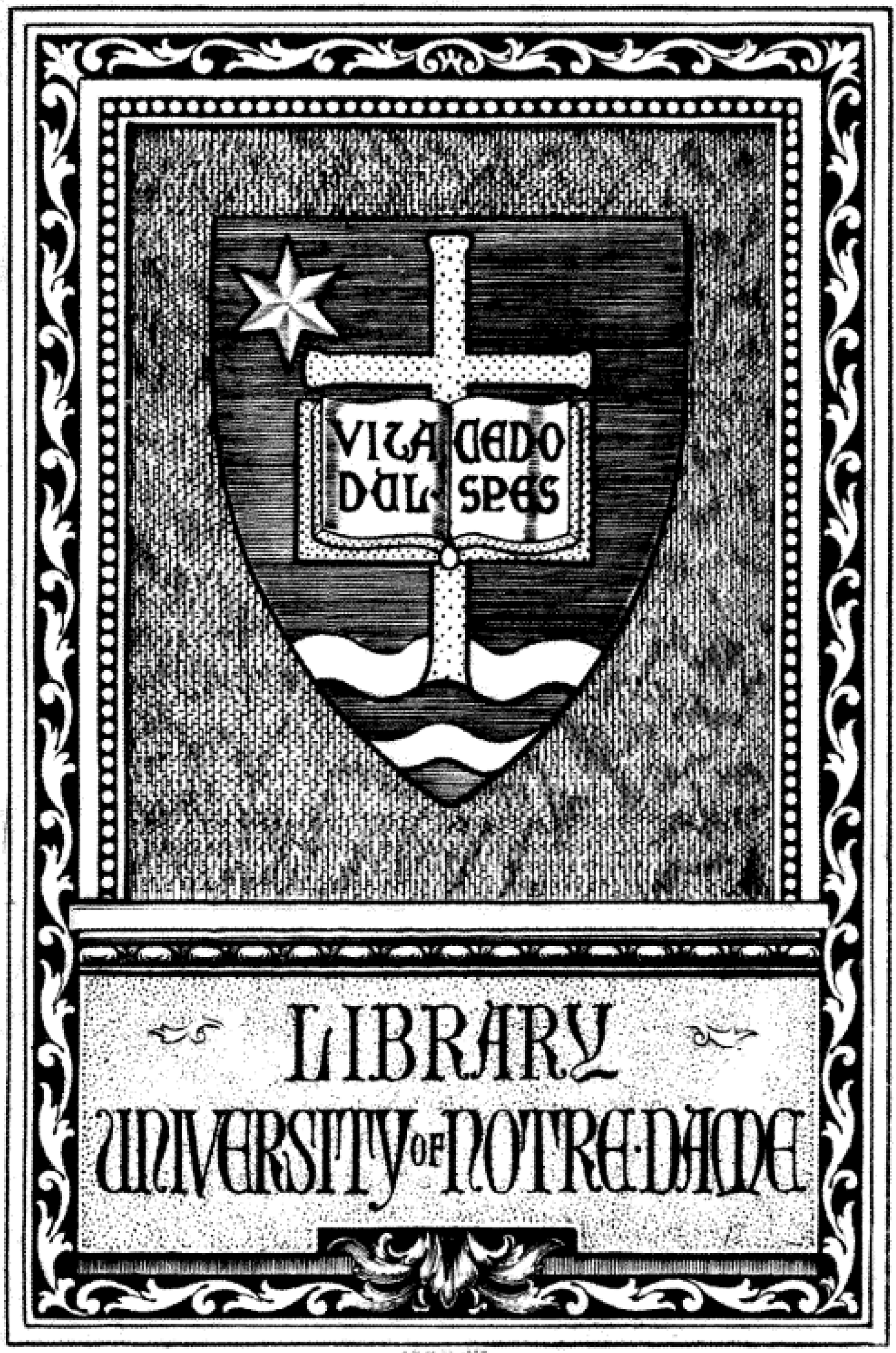

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OBSERVATIONS

OF A

CATHOLIC,

OCCASIONED BY THE

FIRST REPORT

OF

THE MANAGERS

OF, THE

KENTUCKY AUXILIARY,

BIBLE SOCIETY.

BARDSTOWN: (Ky.)

PRINTED BY J. P. EDRINGTON:

1817.

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bservations of a Catholic, occasioned by the First Report of the Managers of the Kentucky Auxiliary Bible Society.

The Managers of the Kentucky Auxiliary Bible Society, having recommended to the no-ice of the Roman Catholic people in Kentucky, statement of the Louisiana Bible Society, made n May 1816, I have paid some attention to heir Report.

The following observations presented themselves, which it is confidently hoped and requested, that the Editor of the Western Monitor will have the liberality to publish, that both sides of the question may be understood.

It has been generally supposed among the other denominations, that Catholics would not read the Bible; it has even been questioned, whether they believe its contens.

It is universally asserted by Protestants, that Catholics are priest ridden; they are represented as a kind of ideots, who pin their faith on their Priests' sleeves: and it is thought that no Priest will permit his parishioner to keep a Bible.

It has been also maintained, in some Theological Magazine, edited in America, that Deism

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is preferable to Catholicism; and not a few men are impressed with a notion, that Catholics are not christians.

Now all Roman Catholics will be happy to find, that these prepossessions must be quite removed by the above Report. "Professing christian love and candor, the reporters have officially informed the public, that the Catholics of Louisiana, even the strictest of them, are all willing, with scarce an exception, to receive and read the Bible, and never think of an objection to it, until informed by a Priest. But instead of complying with his advice, they became more anxious and willing to read the Bible."

Will not this information, thus officially given to the pubiic, with the spirit of christian candor and love, be uncommonly animating to the Roman Catholics? Will it not afford them well grounded hopes, that Protestants will cease to preach, print, and incessantly repeat that Papists are led by the nose, &c.?

The reporters add: "The expressions used by some, on being presented with a New Testament, deserve some notice. One observed, "*this Book contains the truth, and nothing but the truth.*"—Query. How did this Catholic come to believe the truth of the New Testament, if he had not previously been so taught by the

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Priests of the Church, in whose bosom he was regenerated and educated, whose faith he follows? *I would not believe the gospel*, said the great St. Augustin, *if the authority of the Catholic Church did not induce me to it.*

The report goes on: "Another, on reading the title page of the New Testament, as soon as he came to the words Jesus Christ, stopped and said with much earnestness, *This is my King and my God, he is my all.*"—I beg leave here to ask, how a Church, which inspires her children with such sentiments of piety by her lessons and examples, can with propriety be called *superstitious idolatrous*, &c. as it is so much the fashion to nick-name her, even from pulpits professing christianity.

"Another (says the reporters) on being asked, if the Spaniards were satisfied with the New Testament, observed, they could not be christians who were not." This is certainly true, supposing the version to be correct.—I beg leave again to ask, how a church, in whose bosom such faith is received & nurtured, can with propriety be called *anti-christian*, and her Pastors, *anti-chrits?* A true answer will be easy for any person actuated by the spirit of christian candor and love, who will attend to the definition given in the New Testament of an anti-christ, to wit:

a seducer, who confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. 2 John, 7th verse.

The report represents the Spanish Priest of New-Orleans, as condemning by his conduct the French Priests of Louisiana, who have opposed the circulation of French Bibles among their parishioners. All Catholic priests of all nations do, with St. Peter, teach their parishioners, that "*no prophecy of scriptures is of private interpretation*, that there are many things in the sacred writings hard to be understood, and that the unlearned and unstable wrest them to their own perdition." And surely it is as true now, as it was in the Apostles' days, that *many corrupt God's word:* 2 Cor, 2, 17—2 Pet, 2, 20—ibid, 3, 16.

The reporters themselves plainly show that the Scriptures, interpreted by private judgment are liable to be misunderstood, when they publicly mention the objection to the perpetual virginity of the holy mother of our divine Saviour; an error founded on the misapprehension of the text of St. Matthew 1, 25—condemned more than fourteen hundred years ago, in Helvidius, the Arian, and other sectaries, who did then, as many readers of the Bible do now, impugn the divine attributes of the Redeemer. This may be seen in St, Jerome. epist, 50. ad Parm, St.

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Augustin, Hær. 84, St. Epiphanius. Hær. 77. &c. The first of those Fathers shows by scripture-examples, that every one who is first brought forth, is called the *first-born* or the *first-begotton*, without regarding whether any one is born of the same parents afterwards. Thus the first-born are ordered to be redeemed in the law—thus an Angel is said to have killed the first-begotten in Egypt, where doubtless many of them were the only begotten. The same ancient doctor of the church, so conspicuous for his Biblical learning, proves also by divers examples, that the expression of the Evangelist was a manner of speaking usual among the Hebrews, to denote by the preposition *until*, only what is done, without any regard to the future. Thus God says to his divine Son: *Sit on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy foot-stool.* Psalm 109. Shall He sit no longer after his enemies are subdued? See also Isaiah 46, 4. Genes. 8. 6, 7. &c. This same Helvidius, to prop his impious doctrine, added another argument, which is trifling indeed—namely, the mention in the Gospel, of *Christ's brethren.* But it is evident that, in the style of the Scriptures, they who were but cousins, were called brothers and sisters.

I must apologize to my readers for entering thus critically into a subject so delicate; but I

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could not take a view of the report, and overlook a point so important to the honor of our divine Saviour. I will only add, that it seems to me, every christian should earnestly desire, for the glory of the most holy Son of the blessed Virgin, that the impure imagination of Helvidius should never be revived, and that no minister of the Gospel should ever attempt to detract from Her, whom all generations call *blessed* and *full of grace*, who has been favored by Almighty God above all women, and dignified with the singular privilege of becoming the mother of the adorable Emmanuel. Unfortunately, there are too many in our times, who, through a weak fear of superstition, are always ready to degrade the most exalted woman that ever lived, whom Jesus Christ *obeyed on earth*, and crowned in heaven. Luc. 2.

I will now return to the report, and make a few more observations. The scruples of the Spanish Catholics about the correctness of the translation now circulated among them, and a sense of their liability to mistake, as so many others do, the true meaning of the sacred text, are consonant to the above directions and cautions of St. Peter. Hence appears also the propriety of the Catholic Priests' conduct, in guarding their flocks against the pride of human rea-

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son in matters of faith, and the influence of the passions and the imagination, in interpreting the divine Scriptures : For *there is a way that seems to a man right, and the ends thereof lead to death.* Prov. 16, 25.

Still I am confident, that the Catholic Clergy of Kentucky would lend their assistance in disseminating the Bible among their parishioners, provided it were not mutilated and mistranslated, as is King James' version, edited by the Bible Societies.

I am informed that the French translation circulated in Louisiana, is also incorrect. If this be the case, it is hardly probable that the Bishop of New-Orleans, who is a man of learning & piety, will sanction with his authority the conduct of Father Antonio de Sedilio. Would it not be in Catholic Pastors a departure from principle, to prefer a corrupt version before those approved in their church ? But lest I should appear to blame the reverend Father, who is said to stand high in the opinion of the public, I will remark that a Spaniard may possibly have found no incorrectness in the Spanish translation of the Bible, familiar to him from his infancy, and at the same time be unapprized of the defects of a foreign version, which nevertheless may on good grounds be exceptionable to the French

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Clergy of Louisiana, who are better acquainted with their native language.

However ignominious it may appear in the eyes of ignorant or partial men, I count it a happiness to be, as I am from rational conviction, and hope with God's blessing to remain, a Roman Catholic. From my early youth I have been made to read, and not only to read, but very often to learn by heart some portions of Holy writ, under the direction of my Parish Priests, and other clerical teachers. This practice was universal in all the schools and parishes where I was acquainted. It is true however, that I was not permitted to read mutilated and mistranslated Bibles. It is true also, I was not "instructed that it is the right of reason to think as it may please, although it may please to think wrong; the privilege of christianity, to believe what each one may judge proper, although what each judges proper may be impious and false. Revelation was not reduced to an humble system of human philosophy, were human reason or human weakness, where passion and prejudice are the judges." (Fletcher on controversy, p. 160.)

Indeed, I have never known any Catholic Priest or Bishop to forbid the reading of the Scriptures to their parishioners, in the spirit recommended by St. Peter; a condition to which

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they cheerfully conform : For they universally disclaim the presumption of making themselves masters in Isreal, they are not willing to put their hands to the censor, and to arrogate to themselves the office of the Priest-hood, unless called as Aaron was. They are well assured that the office of teaching is quite different from the obligation of hearing—that "faith comes by hearing"—that the lawful authority to preach comes by that divine mission and ordination, which Jesus Christ gave to his Apostles, as he had received it from his Father, & which the Apostles according to St. Paul's prescription have communicated to the Bishops, whom St. Luc tells us the Holy Ghost has placed to govern the Church of God. The Bishops have imparted to the Priests by the imposition of hands the power of the holy ministry, which is thus derived by an uninterrupted succession from the Apostles to the present day, in the primitive Church, called therefore Catholic and Apostolical.

Every part of the Scriptures have been delivered by the divine Spirit, who inspired the sacred writers: therefore, they are not to be interpreted but by the Spirit of God, which was promised by Jesus Christ, and sent to his church, "to guide her into all truth forever :" so that he

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who hears her hears Jesus Christ, he who despises her despises Jesus Christ, and he who will not hear his church, is not better than the heathen and publican. It is evident that the interpretation of the holy Scriptures by private spirit, is pregnant with many dangerous consequences and pernicious errors. We daily observe that a variety of systems in religion, which are countless, perpetual uncertainties and fluctuations in individuals respecting faith, not excepting the Preachers themselves, schisms in the churches, and discords in families, the fashion of wantonly disputing about unfathomable mysteries, the pride of the self-learned in maintaining bold and false assertions with subtlety and obstinacy, though often against self-conviction, laittudinarianism and public profession of infidelity and impiety, blasphemies, heresies, &c. naturally grow out of the practice of reading the Scriptures without humility and an entire submission to the Apostolical church, "which is the pillar and the ground of truth, against which the gates of Hell cannot prevail, and with which Christ has promised to be teaching all days to the world's end." A firm reliance on those divine promises, makes all Catholics "meet in the unity of faith," though far more numerous than all the Protestant communions of different

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creeds summed up together. Solidly founded on that rock, it is their special characteristic not to be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," whereas, others are restless, shifting, & sceptical, throughout their whole lives.

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May 25th 1817,

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