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THE IMPORTANT ADVANTAGES DETAILED OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION.

What has the Christian world gained by the boasted Protestant Reformation? The first gain looked for in it was freedom from all vowed religious restraint, and a living for its earliest Apostles, with their wives and families. They had to preach down the old clergy to make way for themselves; and in this bold attempt they were encouraged and supported by the great and wealthy owners of estates in the vicinity of the Monasteries and religious establishments; the lands and property of which they made sure of gaining, should the new doctrines succeed in effecting their abolition. These were the first gains contemplated, and finally secured by the early reformers and their chief abettors.

But in order to get, and be able to keep them when gotten, it was necessary to hold out in the new system of belief, some prospect of gain to the community also; some powerful lures to attract the people; for, *no flock, no fleece.*

The grand reforming lure held out to these, was the privilege granted to every one of thinking and acting as he pleased. All spiritual jurisdiction and subordination were at once proscribed. Each was now to be his own sole master, free to determine by his own private judgment, what he should believe, and what he should do, in order to be saved. None henceforth were to be reputed as babes, requiring merely the milk of instruction. All were suddenly grown up into the perfect man. No food was too strong for their craving appetites; no substance too hard for their powerful digestion.

Gross as this illusion was, it readily took with the weak and vain; and was hailed, as an exciting and plausible plea by the sensual sinner and the religious sceptic. For such, indeed (not the smallest portion of our race), the tempting lure was wisely intended; and, like the devil's speech to Eve, it won them over by the flattering assurance that they should all henceforth "become as Gods, knowing both good and evil." Gen. 3.

Yet, how evident the inconsistency of the Protestant Reformers; and how unaccountable the blindness of their followers! They promised the people a complete disfranchisement from all instructive authority on earth; telling every one to take the Bible; and, rejecting all human interpretation of it, except his own, to model upon that alone his whole faith and practice.

Now, without asking why one, so contrary to the usual rule of prudence, should rely more upon his own private opinion, than on that of all the world besides; for to do so, were the very extreme of idiotic

presumption; though the inculcation of such an absurdity was indispensable, in order to induce the people, so directly against the Saviour's command, no longer "to hear his Church"—Matt. 18, vii.—or attend to the instructions of her lawful pastors: Luke 10, xvi. Without pressing upon them this unanswerable query: I shall only beg to know with what consistency, after thus constituting every one the sole judge and regulator of his own faith and morals; could or can our Protestant Reformers still offer themselves to the people as their spiritual guides and teachers? They had assured the people that the Bible alone, and as understood by each, was the all and sole sufficient rule of faith to the Christian believer. What need then is there of their farther instructive interference? Or, if there is still need of such; why were we told by them the contrary; and thus made to reject the instruction of the whole Christian Church, as being merely human, and therefore inadmissible? Was it only to have foisted upon us, though human also, and far more inadmissible, the whims and dreams of every strolling teacher, and upstart, untaught and self-commissioned dogmatist? And yet, how strangely unaccountable! An absurdity so grossly palpable; an inconsistency so obvious and glaring; could hitherto pass unnoticed even by the sensible Protestant public! And still more unaccountable how such an evidently self-contradicting principle could have so long prevailed, and won over so many from the sure and unerring guidance of the Church of Christ! But, there is no effect without a cause. Let us look a little nearer then to the cause of the people's fond attachment to so open a delusion.

As we said at first, it was the wish for freedom from the Saviour's yoke, and the greed of gain; the love of here and of worldly acquirements, at the expense of the ancient Clergy and Religious; which prompted the first Reformers, and their powerful abettors, to oppose and cry down the hitherto universally acknowledged instructive authority of the Catholic Church. The bait held out by these to the simple people was not so tangible and substantial as that by which they themselves had been caught by the master-tempter. It was more an imaginary than a real gain. It was, as I also observed, together with the Bible, as a blind; or as a tub cast out to the whale; the irresistible liberty to every one to live and believe as he pleased; the inherent right allowed to all and each, to think and act according to the decision and dictates of their own private judgments. It was loosing the proud human intellect from its enjoined assent to mysteries inexplicable; and leaving it to reason to decide upon them, according to its own vain and variable conjectures. It was subjecting thus the whole revelation of God to the private judgment and determination of every man, woman or child, among their blind and infatuated followers. It was breaking at once from off their necks the yoke of Christ, so galling felt by the sinner, the worldling, and the unbeliever. It was freeing them from all the painful and

humiliating duties prescribed to our sinful but redeemed race, during their short time of trial and probation here, by the suffering Deity incarnate, our propitiatory victim. It was with the profitor of this unhallowed and anti-christian independence upon the instructive authority established by the Saviour, that our Protestant Reformers have gained, and still hold, their baleful sway over so great a portion of the deluded public; who naturally shrink from the investigation and acknowledgement of truths and precepts; the observance of which would trouble the smooth current of their temporal enjoyments; would "beat down every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God: and bring into captivity every understanding in obedience to Christ." 2 Cor. 10, v. This much in a worldly and sinful sense have Protestants gained by their vainly boasted reformation; let us see next what their gains are in a purely spiritual and christian sense. I fear, however, in this sense, their gains have turned but to their loss; and must evidently appear from the following observations.

Their teachers are those alone who retain the substantial gain. The "loaves and fishes" still form their exclusive perquisite and portion; for which they give once a week to their hearers a pitiful puff for all their payments. Could they well give less? Or was it possible to have contrived, at less cost and trouble to themselves, a choicer mode of quartering themselves and their families upon the community?

In order to lessen their task, they have struck off from the Christian calendar not only all the festival days in honour of the Saints; the display of whose virtues excites us to an imitation of their sanctity; but also those commemorative of the chief mysteries of our redemption; as if from a wish, if possible, to bury them in utter oblivion. Is this, I would ask, any spiritual gain afforded to the Christian believer? They have broken off all communion with the Saints, which every Christian professes in the Apostles' creed. They will have nothing to do with "the evil ones" They have strove to break down "the seven pillars of wisdom's house," (Prov. 9, i.) by denying all but two, the seven Sacraments of the Saviour's church; and declaring of the two, which for mere appearance they affect to retain, the one unnecessary, and therefore useless; the other a mere empty sign, and therefore graceless.

They thus induce their hearers to neglect receiving themselves or applying to their hapless offspring the baptismal rite, declared by the Saviour, and held at all times by the Christian church as indispensably necessary for salvation.

They deprive their followers of the promised paraclete, by annulling the institution, by which he is received.

They have excluded the Saviour from their assemblies, by abolishing his sacrifice and sacrament, in which he is rendered present in the midst of those who are "gathered together in his name," (Matt. 18, 21.) but in no other name whatever.

They have closed against their people the door of mercy, which the Saviour had opened in his sacrament of penance to repenting sinners, and shut them out from the needful instruction afforded them thence; and that healing advice which is best adapted to their spiritual ailments.

And to spare themselves the risk and trouble of visiting the sick; they have suppressed the undeniable scriptural and apostolic rites of the "anointing with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5), which enforces the Pastor's personal attendance on the dying; and to which so sure a promise of salvation is annexed.

Being all of them but self-commissioned, and self-inspired, they cannot claim, and therefore must deny the lawful Priesthood's generating sacrament of Holy Orders.

Nor have they left to the married faithful the Saviour's instituted medium of needful grace; by which is sanctified and blessed the general state of mankind.

In all this, I would ask again, what spiritual advantage is afforded to the Christian believer?

They have taught their people to abhor "all things sanctified by prayer and the word of God" (1 Tim. 4, v.) and consecrated to religious purposes.

Likenesses of the Saviour and his Saints; and every external sign, or sensible memorial of him or them, are accounted by such a grievous eye-sore; and held out to their flocks as objects meriting their utmost abhorrence and detestation. The Cross, above all things, they cannot bear to look at. It seems as odious an object to them, as it must be to him who was conquered by it; with whom in this, and all the rest, they appear to have a common sympathy. The statues, just and pictures of the worldly great, they keep and cherish; and introduce even into their places of worship, as into St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey in London. How dear to them are also the portraits and relics of their deceased or absent relations and friends! But the relics and resemblances of our heavenly friends, the Saints, they cast from them with horror; and every thing exhibited reminding us of the incarnate God, our dear Redeemer: whom, notwithstanding, they pretend to worship.

They refuse all honour to his most blessed mother; the woman destined from the beginning "to crush the Serpent's head;" and to repair in fine the fault of Eve. It seems their delight to traduce upon all occasions; and, if possible, vilify in human estimation that purest of creatures, and the most honoured by the deity; by daring to compare her, saluted by an archangel "the most blessed of womankind," with even the most common and worthless of her sex. Whence all this dislike and antipathy borne towards her, if not from the original temptor, whose haughty head she was bid to crush.

No wonder, then, that they should rail against virginity; her peculiar and transcendent virtue; the one so particularly recommended by the Apostle Saint Paul—1 Cor. 7, xxxiv—a virtue so lauded by all the Holy Fathers; and practised in all