

a life according to the standards of one's own denomination fill the requirement?

If not, one of two conclusions follows. Either there are four different standards of practical Christianity, or the denominational differences are unpractical and non-essential. If conduct is based on the personal religious tie, then there is not a common standard of conduct.

If it is not so based, but on some general ground of agreement, then the religious tie is not needed. Unless doctrine, worship, ministrations have a living outcome and purpose, what are they? Mere subjective features of the man's life. They are no longer objective realities. Whether its promoters know it or not, this is the question they will have to meet.

#### A TEST LIKELY TO ARISE.

Already signs of one difficulty have appeared. The Epworth League among the Methodists mark a drawing away. These convention meetings are likely to precipitate the trouble which might otherwise remain for a time in solution.

So long as denominational differences are real, the question must arise, when united action becomes inevitable, as to which of the component sects shall have the control. The success of such a demonstration as this in New York city makes the prize worth contending for. It is not in human nature to decline the combat. And each leading sect will think itself entitled to the supremacy. That Baptists will see Methodists gaining in numbers and putting to the front their special ideas; that Presbyterians will allow Congregationalists to have the say in matters involving tenets and practices, is not to be thought of.

The defeated party in any important issue will either drop its interest or secede and form a league of its own. It is one thing to shout enthusiastically,

"Onward, Christian soldiers"

and quite another to follow an alien lead as to the line of march and to the choice of a battlefield.

History is continually repeating itself; and when a veritable issue against the world, the flesh and the devil comes to be joined, one may look for the same spectacle as that presented by the Covenanters at Bothwell Brigg. In the face of the artillery of Monmouth, the Highlanders of Dalzell and the dragoons of Claverhouse, the Scotch leaders persisted in disputing over the doctrines of grace—and questioning the right of any not sound in the faith to rally their ranks—until the decisive moment was passed and the royal troops had pierced their centre and rolled up their flanks. Such may be the fate of Christian Endeavor when it has to trust to the coherence of mere enthusiasm and a unity of sentiment rather than of principle.

#### INFALLIBILITY.

HOW FAR, AND WHERE, MAY CERTAINTY OF TRUTH BE EXPECTED IN THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH?

By the Bishop of Qu'Appelle.

In the midst of all the doubts and difficulties and differences of opinion on religious questions by which we are surrounded, and of the many forms of faith into which Christendom is now so unhappily divided, many devout and earnest

Christians, not unnaturally, very fervently desire that they could find some infallible authority to tell them what *is* truth. Undoubtedly it would be an inexpressible relief, and would give an intense satisfaction and rest, to many minds now tossed about and wearied with the contentions of Christians if only they could be *certain* as to what they ought to believe.

And it is, of course, the most earnest souls that feel this craving for "peace in believing" the most deeply and painfully. Moreover, the want of an infallible guide and teacher being so trying to the soul, it is very easy to pass to the conviction that there *must* be some such authority somewhere.

It is probably because the Church of Rome *professes* to give this certainty, and to teach with an *infallible authority*, that most who join her communion are attracted to her. It certainly was so with by far the greatest of the converts that she has drawn to her communion from the Church of England in this century, John Henry Newman. To the last, he himself tells us, he felt the full force of all that he had himself so powerfully said about the particular errors of that Church, but he was willing to renounce all his reason against those errors for the acceptance of the one dogma that *what the Church teaches must be right*. No one can read that most wonderful Biography, the "Apologia pro Vita Sua," without feeling that when he wrote that exquisitely pathetic hymn, which so many now sing without for a moment thinking of the heart agony from which it poured forth, or of the end to which he who wrote it was hastening—

Lead kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on;

it was simply a question, for Newman, between infidelity and the acceptance of the guidance of an authority that professed to be *infallible*. And so it has been with many. Moments of heart agony are not the time for judicial judgment.

But it is obvious that the mere fact of a certain religious body *professing* to be able to teach the truth infallibly, is no proof that it *has* the authority and power to do so.

It is our solemn duty as creatures endued with reason and understanding, for the use of which we shall have to give an account to Him Who created us, as for all His other gifts, to investigate the claims and see if it is based on sufficient authority. It is impossible to escape from this responsibility.

We must ever remember that *ultimately* in the last resort, our faith must rest on *our private judgment* as to what has sufficient authority for being believed. Supposing the Pope is appointed infallible teacher of the Church, before I can be certain that *I have* the truth from him I must be convinced in my own mind that he has been so appointed. Or, to take the most extreme case: Our Lord Jesus Christ is undoubtedly the ultimate authority, and an infallible authority to the Christian believer, in all matters of faith and morals. But, even here, it is our *private judgment* that accepts His authority on what we deem sufficient reliable evidence concerning His Resurrection, His miracles, His Word, His character. It is undeniably true that "the basis of every one's faith, Romanist's just as much as ours, is *authority regarded as reliable in his private judgment*, whether that judgment is shallow or solid."

This being so, it is our duty before God, earnestly and patiently, to examine the foundation of the claim before accepting any authority as an infallible teacher.

As Christians, indeed, we are all agreed in accepting Christ Himself as our Lord and Master and infallible Teacher. All authority, all Truth, proceeds from Him. We are all agreed moreover in accepting the New Testament Scriptures as a sufficient witness, at the very least, as to what the Apostles, to whom it had been promised that "Holy Spirit" would "lead them into *into all truth*," and the early Christians believed, taught, and did.

We need not stay to examine the authority on which we accept this basis, which is common to all Christians, Catholics, Romanists, and Protestants alike.

The first question that arises then is, "Is there sufficient ground for the supposition that because want of certainty as to what we ought to believe is so trying to the soul there *must* be an infallible guide somewhere to which we can go for a certain resolution of all questions that may arise?"

It is obvious that the only answer to this question that we can have is, "Did Christ think it necessary that His disciples should have such a Teacher?" or in other words, "Did He give them such a Teacher? If He did *not* give them such a Teacher then it is evident that it is *not necessary* for us, however much we may desire it, that we should have such infallible guidance on all questions. If He did give them any such Teacher, then the further question will arise, "In whom or in what was that teaching power vested, and how was it to be exercised?"

TO BE CONTINUED.

#### A SCEPTIC UNDECEIVED.

Here is the testimony of a sceptic himself to the truth of Christianity, made before death. This was the brilliant Henri Heine; and the authority for this is a French newspaper, which is quoted by the *Christian Guardian* of Toronto. Heine, it says, made an extraordinary avowal of his conversion to Christianity before his death. Amid great and terrible sufferings he displayed astonishing peace and resignation. When the friend who reports the matter asked him to explain his serenity he replied: "My friend, believe me, it is Henri Heine who tells you so; and after having reflected on it for years, and having reconsidered and maturely weighed what has been written on this subject by men of all sorts, believe me that I have reached a conclusion that there is a *God* who judges our conduct; that the *soul is immortal*, and that after this life there is another, when the good will be rewarded and the wicked punished. Yes; this is what Henri Heine says, who has so often denied the Holy Ghost. If ever you have doubted these grand truths, fling from you these doubts, and learn by my example that nothing but simple faith in God's mercy can sustain, without repining, atrocious pains. Without that faith, convinced as I am that my bodily state is desperate, I should long since have put an end to my days." Then he added: "There are fools who, having passed their lives in scepticism and mistake, and denied God in their works and acts, have not *courage* to own that they are *worthily deceived*. As for me, I feel compelled to declare that it is a *cursed falsehood* which long made me blind.—Selected,