

tic and effective protest against Antinomianism by any one who remains an Evangelical. He therefore abandoned Evangelicalism, not as forsaking his native religion but in order to remain faithful to it.

Our letter writer, in charging the Oxford converts with the double discredit of "deserting their native and maturely adopted religion," means to imply, I suppose, that their native religion, if examined, in inward detachment, by the searching eye of maturity, would approve itself to their adult understanding, as it had engaged their childish affections. He declares them to have in fact, adhered to it by this higher form of acceptance as well as by the earlier, as we may say, by the faith of Confirmation as well as of Baptism. They were therefore engaged to it by a double bond, both strands of which by their conversion to Rome, he views them as having recklessly torn asunder, thus giving lamentable proof of spiritual and intellectual instability.

Now had these gentlemen, having been brought up, not only as Christians, but as Christians of a specified type, re-examined their childish religion on growing up, and then deliberately reaccepted it in the strength of mature reflection had they adhered to it in this form for many years; had they wrought their works of Christian evangelism by the medium of this type of doctrine; and had they then suddenly gone off at a tangent into a widely varying form of religion, whether Catholicism or Unitarianism, they would doubtless have created a strong presumption against their intellectual stability, and one that could only have been refuted, if at all, by very detailed explanation.

In reality they did nothing of the kind. At an early date of their adult life they re-examined their early belief, and reaffirmed, with fresh emphasis, all that it had taught them of love to God and trust in Christ of obligation to man, of the fear of hell and the hope of heaven. Discovering however, what in youthful simplicity they had never suspected, that a deep element of lawlessness had been infused into their religion, they threw this off with horror. Discovering, moreover, for the first time, that Luther declared that no one can be saved who holds obedience to the Christian law to have anything to do with justification, they denounced Lutheranism as a heresy.

Moreover, early in their adult lives, they came to accept the Eucharist, not only as a sacrament, but also as a sacrifice, offering a Divine Victim Who was really and fully present. Therefore they were obliged to denounce Calvinism also as a heresy. Moreover, to them came to view confession to an authorized priest as conveying a specific assurance of Divine forgiveness to a burdened soul. Furthermore, they could see no good reason for limiting the number of the sacraments to two, or for confining their efficacy to the simple augmentation of faith by the act of the receiver. And while they did not find the invocation of saints commanded in the New Testament, as indeed the Catholic Church does not command it, they could find nothing in Scripture forbidding it; nor could they find taught in Scripture, or confirmed by early use, that all the elect are certainly made at once, at death, perfect in glory and blessedness, that there is not, for most of them a delay of full salvation. Yet as Protestantism is so hostile to all these things, they came finally to view Catholicism as the larger and earlier creed, which is purer in morals, as insisting on regenerate love as a condition of acceptance with God, but more indulgent in refusing to impose on the faith of the faithful perpetual negations for which it is hard to find the warrant in Scripture.

Therefore the Oxford Converts, pretty much one and all, had, from an early period of their mature lives for Evangelicalism or High-and-Dry Churchmanship, substituted essential Catholicism. It was in the strength of this doctrine that they had gained note as scholars, thinkers, preachers, in the Church of England. Their final secession to Rome was viewed, alike by themselves and by their opponents, as simply the logical culmination

of the doctrines which they had taught for many years, as these again were the development, and in their view, the rectification of their baptismal Christianity. It would be hard to find a change of outward communion with less breach of inward continuousness.

This gentleman then tells us that these converts, the whole previous history of whose lives and opinions he so misconceives and misrepresents, "proceeded to put themselves at the service of Italian Cardinals and fanatical priests of many nations."

This misrepresentation, were it possible, is greater than the former. The three leaders of the Oxford secession were the Anglican archdeacon, Henry E. Manning, and the simple Anglican presbyters, John Henry Newman, and William George Ward, the last of whom never took orders in his new Church. Now it would be hard to find three men of whom it would be more preposterously untrue to say, that they put themselves at the service of anybody whatever, beyond their general allegiance to the Catholic Church. I speak not without warrant, for I am not bragging much in claiming a far more interior and detailed knowledge of the lives of all three than this gentleman gives sign of possessing. Indeed, were it not for his native capacity and general cultivation, as well as for his tone of good-breeding, his "extensive and various misinformation" concerning Catholic matters might bring on this letter the reproach of being flatly commonplace. To be sure, such a character would render it all the more effective in the circles for which it is particularly intended.

We will next consider more in detail how far it is true of either Newman, Manning, or Ward, that they "placed themselves at the service" of anybody whatever in the sense meant in this letter. I do not speak of Faber, who is perhaps more obnoxious to this gentleman's insinuation.

CHARLES C. STARBUCK
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SHAKESPEARE A CATHOLIC.

Father S. A. Blackmore in a recent lecture at Creighton university asserted that Shakespeare lived and died a Catholic. He quoted passages from the poet's writings to show his sympathy with Catholicism and his dislike for the "new religion" of the day.

"Shakespeare passed his days amid the turbulence of religious persecution," said the speaker. "His personal history was neglected for several hundred years after his death and the scraps of history which were recorded of him were prejudiced by non-Catholic persons."

"Shakespeare was not a Protestant; he was not a follower of the reformation; he met with no patronage from those of his age. He lived at the apex of two great religious epochs. We have no right to consider him an offspring of the reformation, for had he been such he would have been imbued with the spirit that was uppermost during his time in England. He represented the noblest product of the middle age—Catholicism. Non-Catholics were wont to assume that he was a Protestant, that his thoughts embraced the new religion."

"It was political circumstances that caused Elizabeth to embrace Protestantism, of which she never missed an opportunity to express her private dislike. If Shakespeare joined the new religion, he had every chance to give expression to the same, which he did not."

"The poet's mother and father were both faithful Catholics, a fact that is indisputable. There is documentary evidence to show that they suffered much for their faith. They did not forsake their religion, notwithstanding the troublous times in which they lived. In his last testament and will Shakespeare's father expressed his belief in all the dogmas of the Catholic church, which fact was never questioned until many years after the death of the illustrious bard, when his religious tenets were brought into dispute. The entire town of Stratford was Catholic. Shakespeare's relatives and

close friends were avowedly Catholic.

"When the poet went to London he associated with those who were aligned against those who stood for the religious persecutions obtaining at that time, which persecutions were arrayed against the Catholics. When Elizabeth died Shakespeare, alone among the poets of his day, refused to pen even a line in memory of the dead queen."

"When King James assumed the throne all looked for a change of religious conditions, but such not coming to pass then Shakespeare was moved to write his great epic dramatic poem, 'Julius Caesar,' which reflected the tyranny of the day."

"From a material standpoint, with his rising success and fame, the poet had every reason to join the majority and renounce his faith in Catholicism, but instead he left London and returned to the solitude of Avon. 'The times were out of joint,' he expressed it. His closest and staunchest friends were being summarily dealt with, and his state of mind changed. His anguish and suffering of mind were marked in his writings at that time. But with all this there is no proof that he changed his religion. On the contrary, we have every proof that he lived and died a Catholic. There are records on file at Oxford to substantiate that fact."

"In his plays he carefully avoided appealing to the popular notions against the Catholic faith. He expressed a decided aversion against the Bible quoting Puritans of the day. The mainspring of the poet's aversion to Protestantism was his love for Catholicism. He ridiculed the clergy of the new church, but not that of the Catholic faith, although the latter was the wont of his contemporaries. His plays teem with teachings and suggestions of the Catholic faith, and he held in respect those things particularly revered by the Catholics."—New York Herald.

DR. DE COSTA SAYS OF HIS CONVERSION TO THE FAITH.

"With profound gratitude I acknowledge the great goodness of God, who mercifully enlightened my path, giving grace to overcome the deep prejudice implanted by false education; and has now led me, not without trial, yet with a shepherd's gentle hand to the fold of the Catholic Church. Faith is the gift of God, and, whatever agents may be employed, primarily it is God, the Holy Ghost, Sanctifier of the Faithful, who must be our guide. My course, therefore, in entering the Catholic Church may not be ascribed to any mere human impulse; and yet I must indicate the mode of thought that stands connected with so great a change."

"This change was not the work of a day or a year. In reality, the process began long ago. Those who were near me plainly saw that my theological views were undergoing evolution, and that I was outgrowing the system in which I had been trained. On the other hand, the community at large, or at least the observant portion familiar with the tendencies of the Reformation theological system, must see that the position I took is intimately connected with great changes in modern thought. The sad, fallen estate of post-reformation belief forced upon me a reconsideration of principles, the result being the conviction that the reformation was not based upon any true foundations."

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