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## PROTESTANT TRIBUTES TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

### Talk With a Parson

Parson: "It (the Catholic Church) has never enacted a law nor adopted a policy that looked toward life, growth and spiritual evolution since it came into the world."

Now, Parson, we propose to prove that you are exceedingly ignorant of the history of European civilization and of the Catholic Church as the controlling factor in it. We will do this not from Catholic, but from exclusively Protestant authorities. No, because they better than Catholic authorities, but being Protestants, their testimony will not be suspected of bias in favor of the Church, but will be considered as an honest and frank effort to be true to the facts of history. Unlike you, Parson, the authors we shall quote are well known to the world in the field of literature and learning.

The first we quote is the historian

LECKY.

In his "History of Rationalism," he says:

The Catholic Church was the very heart of Christendom. The result of the ascendancy it gained brought about a stage of civilization that was one of the most important in the evolutions of society. By consolidating the heterogeneous and anarchical elements that succeeded the downfall of the Roman Empire, by infusing into Christendom the conception of a bond of unity that is superior to the divisions of nationhood, and of a moral tie that is superior to force, by softening slavery into serfdom, and preparing the way for the ultimate emancipation of labor. **CATHOLICISM LAID THE VERY FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN CIVILIZATION.** In the transition from slavery to serfdom, and in the transition from serfdom to liberty, she was the most zealous, the most unwearyed and the most efficient agent. Vol. 2, pages 36, 37, 209.

The great statesman and scholar,

WILLIAM E. GLADSTONE,

said:

Since the first three hundred years of persecution the Roman Catholic Church has marched for fifteen hundred years at the head of civilization, and has driven, harnessed to its chariot as horses to a triumphal car, the chief intellectual and material forces of the world; its art, the art of the world; its genius, the genius of the world; its greatness, glory, grandeur and majesty have been almost, though not absolutely, all that, in these respects, the world has had to boast of.—Quoted from Dr. Zahm's "Catholic Science and Catholic Scientists," page 116.

DR. SAMUEL K. MAITLAND

was librarian to the Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury, editor for several years of the British

Magazine, author of Essays on the Dark Ages, and many other works. In his essays, he says:

At the darkest periods the Christian Church was the source and spring of civilization, the dispenser of what little comfort and security there was in the things of this world, and the quiet scriptural asserter of the rights of man. Page 393.

M. GUIZOT,

the Protestant French historian, says:

There can be no doubt that the Catholic Church struggled against the great vices of the social state—against slavery, for instance. These facts are so well known that it is needless for me to enter into details.—"History of Civilization," lect. vi.

REV. E. CUTTS,

author of "Turning Points in English History"—a work which was published by the English Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge—says:

In the Middle Ages the Church was a great popular institution \* \* \* One reason, no doubt, of the popularity of the Mediæval Church was that it had always been the champion of the people and the friend of the poor. In politics the Church was always on the side of the liberties of the people against the tyranny of the feudal lords. In the eye of the nobles the laboring population were beings of an inferior caste; in the eye of the Church they were brethren in Christ, souls to be won and trained and fitted for heaven. \* \* \* On the whole, with many drawbacks, the Mediæval Church did its duty—according to its light to the people. It was the great cultivator of learning and art, and it did its best to educate the people. It had vast political influence, and used it on the side of the liberties of the people. \* \* \* By means of its painting and sculpture in the churches, its mystery plays, its religious festivals, its catechism and its preaching, it is probable that the chief facts of the gospel history and the doctrines of the creeds were more universally known and more vividly realized than among the masses of our present population.—"Turning Points of English Church History," 1874, pages 16, 165.

JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE,

the Protestant English historian, says:

Never in all their history, in ancient times or modern, never that we know of, have mankind thrown out of themselves anything so grand, so useful, so beautiful as the Catholic Church once was. In these times of ours well-regulated selfishness is the recognized rule of action; every one of us is expected to look out for himself first, and take care of his own interests. At the time I speak of the Church ruled the State with the authority of a conscience, and self-interest, as a motive of action, was only named to be

abhorred. The bishops and clergy were regarded freely and simply as the immediate ministers of the Almighty; and they seemed to have really deserved that high estimate of their character. It was not for the doctrine which they taught, only or chiefly, that they were held in honor. Brave men do not fall down before their fellow-mortals for the words which they speak or for the rites which they perform. Wisdom, justice, self-denial, nobleness, purity, high-mindedness—these are the qualities before which the free-born races of Europe have been contented to bow; and in no order of men were such qualities to be found as they were found six hundred years ago in the clergy of the Catholic Church. They called themselves the successors of the Apostles; they claimed, in their Master's name, universal spiritual authority, but they made good their pretensions by the holiness of their own lives. They were allowed to rule because they deserved to rule, and in the fullness of reverence kings and nobles bent before a power which was nearer to God than their own. Over prince and subject, chieftain and serf, a body of unarmed, defenceless men reigned supreme by the magic of sanctity. They tamed the fiery Northern warriors who had broken in pieces the Roman Empire. They taught them—they brought them really and truly to believe—that they had immortal souls, and that they would one day stand at the awful judgment bar and give account for their lives there. With the brave, the honest, and the good, with those who had been just in all their dealings; with those who had fought against evil and had tried valiantly to do their Master's will, at that great day it would be well. For cowards, for profligates, for those who lived for luxury and pleasure and self-indulgence, there was the blackness of eternal death.

An awful conviction of this tremendous kind the clergy had effectually instilled into the mind of Europe. It was not a form of words repeated once a week at church; it was an assurance entertained on all days and in all places without any particle of doubt. And the effect of such a belief on life and conscience was simply immeasurable. \* \* \* In the eyes of the clergy the serf and his lord stood on the common level of sinful humanity. Into their ranks high birth was no passport. They were themselves, for the most part, children of the people; and the son of the artisan and peasant rose to the mitre or the triple crown, just as now-a-days the rail-splitter and the tailor become Presidents of the Republic of the West. The Church was essentially democratic, while at the same time it had the monopoly of learning.—"Short Studies on Great Subjects," Vol. I, pages 33, 37.

The learned

CANON FARRAR,

in his "Saintly Workers," says:

What was it that had preserved the best elements of Christianity in the fourth century? The self-sacrifice of the hermits. What was it which saved the principles of law and order and civilization? What rescued the wreck of ancient literature from universal conflagration? What restrained, what converted the intruding Teu-

tonic races? What kept alive the dying embers of science? What fanned into a flame the white ashes of art? What reclaimed waste lands, cleared forests, drained fens, protected miserable populations, encouraged free labor, equalized widely separated ranks? What was the sole witness for the cause of charity, the sole preservative of even partial education, the sole rampart against intolerable oppression? What weak and unarmed power alone retained the strength and the determination to dash down the mailed hand of the baron when it was up-lifted against the serf, to proclaim a truce of God between warring violences and to make insolent wickedness tremble by asserting the inherent supremacy of goodness over transgression, of knowledge over ignorance, of quiet righteousness over brute force? You will say the Church, you will say Christianity. Yes, but for many a long century the very bulwarks and ramparts of the Church were the monasteries, and the one invincible force of the Church lay in the self-sacrifice, the holiness, the courage of the monks.—"Saintly Workers," pages 82, 83.

In his

HULSEAN LECTURES

before the University of Cambridge this same Canon Farrar, chaplain of Queen Victoria, said:

From the fifth to the thirteenth century the Church was engaged in elaborating the most splendid organization which the world has ever seen. Starting with the separation of the spiritual from the temporal power, and the mutual independence of each in its own sphere, Catholicism worked hand in hand with feudalism for the amelioration of mankind. Under the influence of Catholicism the monasteries preserved learning, and maintained the sense of the unity of Christendom. Under the combined influence of both grew up the lovely idea of chivalry, moulding generous instincts into gallant institutions, making the body vigorous and the soul pure, and wedding the Christian virtues of humility and tenderness to the natural graces of courtesy and strength. During this period the Church was the one mighty witness for light in an age of lawlessness, for personal holiness in an epoch of licentious rage. Amid the despotism of kings and the turbulence of aristocrats it was an inestimable blessing that there should be a power which, by the unarmed majesty of simple goodness, made the haughtiest and boldest respect the interests of justice and tremble at the thought of temperance, righteousness and judgment to come.—Hulsean lectures for 1870, page 115.

An American writer in the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, 1840, says:

It would then, perhaps be expedient to refer the history of Europe in the Middle Ages to Italy, as the history of the ancient world has always been referred to Rome. The great ascendancy of the Papal, and the influence of Italian genius on literature and fine arts of all countries, made Italy essentially the centre of light, the sovereign of thought, the capital of civilization.

ANOTHER PROTESTANT WRITER in the North American Review, 1845, writes:

Though seemingly enslaved, the Church was in reality the life of Europe. She was the refuge of the distressed, the friend of the slave, the helper of the injured, the only hope of learning. To her chivalry owed its noble aspirations; to her art and agriculture looked for every improvement. The ruler from her learned some rude justice; the ruled learned faith and obedience. Let us not cling to the superstition, which teaches that the Church has always upheld the cause of tyrants. Through the Middle Ages she was the only friend and advocate of the people, and of the rights of man. To her influence was it owing that, through all that strange era, the slaves of Europe were better protected by law than are now the free blacks of the United States by national statutes.

SAMUEL LAING,

a Scotchman and a Presbyterian, in his "Observations on Europe," says:

Law, learning, education, science, all that we term civilization in the present social condition of the European people, spring from the supremacy of the Roman Pontiff and of the Catholic priesthood over the kings and nobles of the Middle Ages. All that men have of civil, political and religious freedom in the present age may be clearly traced, in the history of every country, to the working and effects of the independent power of the Church of Rome over the property, social economy, movement, mind and intelligence of all connected with her in the social body.

We will close our quotations from Protestant authorities by giving another from

REV. CANON FARRAR.

Consider what the Church did for education. Her ten thousand monasteries kept alive and transmitted that torch of learning which otherwise would have been extinguished long before. A religious education, incomparably superior to the mere athletics of the noble's hall, was extended to the meanest serf who wished for it. This fact alone, by proclaiming the dignity of the individual, elevated the entire hopes and destinies of the race. The humanizing machinery of schools and universities, the civilizing propaganda of missionary zeal, were they not due to her? And, more than this, her very existence was a living education; it showed that the successive ages were not sporadic and accidental scenes, but were continuous and inherent acts in one great drama. In Christendom the yearnings of the past were fulfilled, the direction of the future determined. In dim but magnificent procession "the giant forms of empires on their way to ruin" had each ceded to her their sceptres, bequeathed to her their gifts. \* \* \* Life became one broad, rejoicing river, whose tributaries, once severed, were now united, and whose majestic stream, without one break in its continuity, flowed on, under the common sunlight, from its source beneath the throne of God.—"Christianity and the Race," page 186.

Such, Parson, is our reply to your statement. In the light of these Protestant scholars and historians you will be able to see that you have made a sorry

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