

Our Attitude Toward Romanism.

An Address Delivered Before the Baptist Union of England, at Plymouth, E.

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The temper of our people toward Romanism has grown milder of late years. If we are as good Protestants as our fathers we are not so fierce. They, for the most part, had no doubt about the meaning of the Scarlet Woman and the Man of Sin and the Mystery of Iniquity; and when the hour struck for Catholic emancipation many of them would have preferred that Romanists should have removed their own disabilities by removing themselves to lands where British rule did not obtain. In so far as our milder temper implies a larger and more enlightened Christian charity it is good. But in so far as it is due to laxity about truth, and an illusory idea that our controversy with Rome has been settled long ago, it is open to gravest criticism. I should be unworthy the name of Baptist if I suggested for one moment any going back upon our principles of religious toleration and civil freedom. We not only concede, but we claim, that the Roman Catholic shall be at liberty to worship according to the dictates of his conscience, and that his heresy shall not be made a ground for withholding from him the fullest rights of citizenship—with one abatement. I trust we are sound to a man in our determination at all hazards to uphold the Protestant Succession. Of course a Romanist will twit us with inconsistency and want of logic. He will urge that if a Catholic is to have full rights of citizenship he must have the right to rule should the crown fall in his way. I can't help it, sir. There is a logic of events as well as a logic of schools. Providence sometimes constructs an argument in history that no weaver of syllogisms can confute; and we reckon that Providence has proved that it is for ever unlawful for a Roman Catholic to sway the Sceptre of the British Empire. We should be bad Baptists if we begrudged Roman Catholics freedom, and we should be bad Christians if we failed to appreciate Christlike character when we find it within the Romish pale. We revile the system, but we revere the saints—not the nominal saints, but the real ones; whether we meet them in Middle Ages or in the next street. Our controversy is not with individual Romanists, many of whom are Christians first and Romanists after; many of whom have been carefully guarded from acquaintance with evangelical statements of truth, and have been taught to believe that we do not worship Christ, that we make Him a liar, and that we must be all lost. Such are the mild assertions of one of their popular catechisms. I profoundly believe that a multitude whom we cannot number, inside the Romish Church, are Christ's little ones, who love Him as a Kempis did, as Bernard did, and would die for Him happy-hearted. How they endure the poison of sacerdotalism and idolatry we may be unable to explain. But love is a great antidote, and we have read of those who "shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them."

WE GLORY IN THE CHRIST LIFE WHEREVER WE FIND IT;

to do otherwise were to sin against the Holy Ghost. Up to date we know no reason why Romanists should enjoy special privileges, why the laws of the realm should be strained in their favour; nor do we see why public monies should be put to private uses in their educational institutions. Freedom, but not privilege! And on our part as Baptists no easy going indifference toward the spread in this realm of a system which we believe corrupts the truth of the Gospel, makes the Word of God of none effect by the traditions of men; a system, moreover, which is the sworn enemy of the liberty it enjoys and abuses. Everybody knows that in past ages certain of the popes claimed and contrived to exercise enormous power. They made and unmade princes, counted emperors their vassals, and awed turbulent nations into meekest docility by the threat of their ghostly ban. But nowadays there is a vague feeling abroad that all this has changed beyond the possibility of reversion. The Papacy, it is assumed, has mellowed with the times. The pope is the chief minister of a venerable Christian denomination. His office is spiritual, his character is estimable; he is a kind of permanent president of a larger Baptist Union, who takes a great interest in social questions and sometimes sends kind messages to the Queen. There has been change surely; but

THE NOTION THAT PAPAL PRETENSIONS ARE LESS THAN FORMERLY IS WIDE OF THE TRUTH.

We have no excuse for ignorance upon this matter. Pope Leo XIII. has lately issued an Encyclical in which expounds his authority and urges his own claims. The language is mild, temperate, courteous; but the claims are stupendous. He is God's vice-gerent. The authority, the magisterium bestowed by Christ upon St. Peter, has been handed down securely through the long line of

St. Peter's infallible successors to Leo himself, who is thereby rendered infallible. His ex cathedra utterances have the validity of immediate revelation. What he pronounces true is of the faith, what he disallows is heresy and accursed. The church of which he is the visible head, being Vicar of the invisible Christ, is the body of Christ, the one true church, to depart from which is to depart from salvation. Surely after this any other claim that mortal man can fabricate is but a paltry detail. And what basis does the Pope disclose for this astounding assumption of personal infallibility? Mainly the text: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock"—interpreted as meaning upon thee—"do I build my church," &c. The Pope's attempt to prove Peter's possession of unique and supreme magisterium is a hopeless failure, whether his appeal is to Scripture or to the Fathers. As our friend Dr. Dawson Burns and others have sufficiently shown. But even if Peter's magistrum could be proved, despite his own ignorance of it, despite Paul's ignorance of it, and despite the unconsciousness of it of the early church—if, moreover, it could be proved instead of being merely asserted that he was in Rome, that he was Bishop of Rome, and that he transmitted his magisterium to his successor. I say, if all these things could be proved, it passes comprehension to realize how this precious deposit could be conveyed intact across some of the bogs and morasses that we encounter as we make our way down the line of Popes. A dignitary of the Church of Rome once assured me, in conversation, that the scandals about certain Popes were heretical fictions. They were all good men but one, and in his case the infallibility was unimpaired, because it resided in him as Pope, and not as man. I wonder if this gentleman had ever read the passage from Baronius, which I had not by me at the time, but which I will read to you here and now. Baronius was a Catholic, and apparently he was a godly man, whose heart was wrung by the things he wrote, and whose candor was not stained by

THE CUMBERSOME DOGMA OF PAPAL INFALLIBILITY.

Listen: "What was then the face of the Holy Roman Church? How most foul, when harlots at once most powerful and most base ruled at Rome, at whose will Sees were changed, bishops were presented, and—what is horrible to hear and unutterable—pseudo-bishops, their paramours, were intruded into the See of St. Peter, who are enrolled in the catalogue of Roman Pontiffs only for the sake of marking the times." Elsewhere the same writer exclaims thus: "O shame! O grief! How many monsters, horrible to be seen, were intruded by secular princes into that seat which is to be revered by angels." We want to know how this precious jewel of the magisterium was carried over these miry places unharmed and undefiled. The Romish doctrine of intention makes the problem more perplexing. I suppose Romanists will say that it was by miracle. And one can only answer with scorn: In that case our Lord has discarded the principle of His own injunction, "Cast not your pearls before swine." But it is maintained by many that AN INFALLIBLE CHURCH WITH AN INFALLIBLE HEAD IS SUCH A BOON

that it were worth while to make a gallant attempt to believe in it. From the point of view of the rank and file of believers I cannot see the gain. Infallibility is a boon to the church politician, doubtless, but how does it help the peasant and his wife? "Oh," says the Romanist, "the church can tell them just what to believe, and so they can never be doubtful or confused; whereas the humble Protestant who gropes through the maze wilderness of the Bible, with only the glimmering taper of his own private judgment to guide him, can never be sure of anything." But avoiding generalities, let us ask how does it work out? Does the humble Romanist grasp with exact knowledge the complex content of the Catholic faith? "Nay, but it is not necessary," is the answer, "if he believes explicitly in three or four great cardinal truths, such as the Trinity, the Atonement, and future rewards and punishments, and further believes implicitly in the church, and wills to believe what she teaches; even though he should have some faulty opinion on some minor matter, his trust in the church will cover him, and his implicit error will be forgiven on account of his implicit faith." Precisely! And we maintain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, may find the Cross in the Bible and Him who hung upon it; and finding Christ, may easily attain unto three or four cardinal truths about God and man and destiny. And if he trusts Christ absolutely as Saviour, and wills to know His truth and obey His commandments, even though he err on this or that matter of doctrine, his faith in Christ will cover him, and his fault will be forgiven. In recent overtures the Pope appeals to our private judgment and asks us, on such poor evidence as he can muster, to accept him as our spiritual Lord. From the pages of the gospel Christ appeals to our private judgment, and asks us to accept Him as Lord. And when, bowing at His wounded

feet, we cry with Thomas: "My Lord and my God," the intrusion of the Pope strikes us as ineffable impertinence. In the Encyclical to which I have referred, Pope Leo XIII. makes this noteworthy statement: "They who pretend that the church has any wish to interfere in civil matters or to infringe upon the rights of the State know it not or wickedly calumniate it." One would certainly require to have many pages expunged from English history before this could be accepted as other than a specious lure on the part of a man whose infallibility does not hinder him from forgetting the decisions and the deeds of his infallible predecessors. Dr. Dawson Burns, in his critique upon this encyclical, pertinently asks whether there is any calumny in the statement that no Pope—not Leo XIII. himself—has repudiated the Bull of Pope Boniface VIII. in 1302 affirming the right to dispose sovereigns? and that no Pope down to the present has ever declared that the persecution and slaying of Protestants is unchristian and to be condemned? Dr. Burns argues further, acutely and justly, that the Pope's disavowal of any wish to interpose in civil matters is utterly valueless when he claims the right "to decide what things are religious and what are civil, and to be the supreme judge in all questions of morals." I suppose if we dragged the Pope through those chapters of our own annals which tell of excommunications, abetted invasions, and inspired persecutions, he would maintain that there was no civil interference; that the sinners were, for the time being, misled or revolting members of the true church; that the Papal intervention was disciplinary for the spiritual health of the King and Commons. So let it be; and if it be so, let every Protestant among us confirm himself in the conviction that he would rather see this dear little Island of ours swept bare by blue Atlantic waves than ruled by a sovereign upon whose neck the Pope of Rome might claim the right to place his heel." In our time the pretensions of the Papacy are accentuated, and the errors of the Roman church are confirmed. How can it be otherwise.

HOW CAN ROME REFORM?

How can she abandon any of her false positions? The retrospective force of her dogma of infallibility binds her forever to the corpse of her dead past. She may add to her errors, but she cannot diminish them. Now, what is the chief error of Rome after the fiction of infallibility, which covers all? Is it not her crass sacerdotalism? her blasphemous elevation of the priest to something like equality with God? Yet her shame is her glory. In a recent address Cardinal Vaughan explained that the two peculiar characteristics of the Church of Rome which marked her out as the true church were these: (1) Her priests have power to convert the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ; (2) her priests have the power to forgive sins. What monstrous claims! The priest takes the bread and makes it God, and when he has made it God he bids the people worship the God that he has made. Divine powers! The powers of the priest go a point beyond the Divine. God made man out of the dust; but the priest makes God out of the bread and wine. A friend of mine puts it this way: "The mystery of godliness is God manifest in the flesh, but the mystery of iniquity is God manifest in a wafer." You may dispute the exegesis, but you will sympathize with the indignation. Listen to the following words from the Catechism of the Council of Trent: "Seeing the bishops and priests are, as it were, the interpreters and ambassadors of God, who in God's name teach men the Divine law and the rules of life, and personate God himself on the earth, it is evident, therefore, that their function is such that a greater cannot be conceived. . . . They hold the power and the name of the Immortal God among us." And as regards the forgiveness of sins. Who doubts that auricular confession has succeeded in provoking sin while ostensibly procuring its forgiveness. History declares that it has been so. Common sense declares that it must be so. The priest is instructed to ask his questions privately, and there is no priest in England who dares declare in public what these questions are. I have never read the instructions to the priest anent confession which the Romish doctors proffer. But the late Archbishop Magee had read them, and to his mind they constituted "an infernal catechism of iniquity." The Irish are priest-ridden, but they are not dull, and they have this proverb: "As foul as a priest's ear." I have no time to refer to other errors which reformers stigmatized as "blasphemous conceits," beyond saying this: If any one doubts whether the worship of Mary amounts to Mariolatry, which Romists deny, let him read the "Glorias of Mary," by St. Liguori, who was canonized in 1839, and concerning whom the Pope then said that his writings contained nothing worthy of censure; and the "Glorias of Mary" will make it clear that as the priest displaces Christ on earth, so Mary displaces him in heaven.

ROME HAS NOT REPENTED OF HER CRIME.

Has she ever done penance for her slaughter of Protestants? Protestants have persecuted, truly; but they have repented and denounced their own evil works. Has Rome repented of her immeasurable cruelties? Has she done penance for the blood that washed the Netherlands, that stained the Swiss mountains, that cried to God from

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