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THE TRUE WITNESS
AND
CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, NOV. 23, 1855.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

The war panic is fast abating, and judging from the tone of the American press, it would seem that, though John Bull and cousin Jonathan may growl at one another across the Atlantic, they are not such fools as to fall a fighting. Explanations have passed betwixt the respective Cabinets, and no doubt the diplomatists will set matters to rights, and prevent a war even if they can not abate the bitter, and we suppose ineradicable feeling of hostility that Yankees entertain towards Britain, and British subjects.

From the Crimea, we have no further news. In London, the dearth of provisions has caused much dissatisfaction amongst the poor and laboring classes. Large meetings have been held, and violent speeches have been followed up by still more violent deeds. It is in vain to attempt to ignore the fact, that a spirit of discontent with the existing state of things is rife amongst the masses, and that a serious outbreak is amongst the possibilities for which the Government should be prepared. An empty stomach makes a dangerous subject; and with wheat at 12s the bushel, we fear that there are many empty stomachs in England at the present moment.

THE INQUISITION IN CANADA.

Yes—henceforth the “Holy Tribunal” must be fairly reckoned amongst our Canadian institutions; and Canada must be content to share the reproach—such as it is—of visiting offences purely spiritual with temporal punishments, with Rome, Spain, and the Tuscan Dominions. For we too have our Inquisition; the only difference between ours, and that of the above named countries, being that, whilst theirs is a spiritual Court, presided over by ecclesiastics and theologians—with us, a purely lay or civil tribunal hears the cause, pronounces sentence, and awards punishment. “To be a well favored man is the gift of fortune,” says Dogberry; but the knowledge of theology of course “comes by nature.”

A. M. Rudolph, editor of a journal published in Upper Canada, in the German language, and of ultra-Protestant or denying principles, has been protesting a little too far for the majority of his co-religionists. He had got himself involved, it would appear, in a discussion with a Catholic priest in the County of Waterloo; in the course of which, he not only blasphemously assailed the “Christian truth” of Transubstantiation, or the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist—for this would have been a highly laudable act—but he protested against and coarsely reviled—in the style of a Cummings, an Achilli or a Kirwan when denouncing the great truths of Catholicity—some other doctrines or truths of the Christian religion. For this latter offence—whilst Cummings or a Garazzi, a Nick Kirwan or Leahy, may “blasphemously libel” the Church of Christ as long as they please—M. Rudolph was indicted, put on his trial, convicted, and fined. This too in a country, be it remembered, in whose Statute Book it is declared to be desirable to do away with all semblance even of connection betwixt Church and State—religion and politics—things spiritual and things secular. Even in the annals of Protestantism it would be difficult to find an instance of more monstrous inconsistency.

The accused—as we read in the journals of the Upper Province—“was tried at the Berlin assizes and found guilty of having published and circulated a blasphemous libel on the Christian religion.” At this announcement we naturally ask—Who were they who sat in judgment in this cause? what means had they of knowing, with infallible certainty, what is the Christian religion, and the “truths” therein revealed? wherein was their collective judgment upon these matters to be preferred to the “private judgment” of M. Rudolph?—but for giving expression to which “private judgment” he was arraigned before them. And if they had no better means than had M. Rudolph for arriving at the certain knowledge of revealed truth, how—we ask—in the name of all that is absurd, of all that is inconsistent, of all that is Protestant, could they presume to find him “guilty of blaspheming religious truth?”

“A blasphemous libel” on the “Christian religion” implies of course a denial of its truths; and it matters not which of these truths it is, that is libeled or denied; whether it be this one, or another, or even all of them. The offence before God, is still the same; and if, in one case, cognisable by a tribunal upon earth, so also in every other. Why then, if M. Rudolph is tried and convicted for his libels, are the French Canadian Missionary Society, the *Globe*, the *Montreal Witness*, and the Protestant press gener-

ally, allowed to issue their “blasphemous libels against the Christian religion” with impunity?

The Judge before whom the case was tried laid down the law upon this subject, as he interpreted it; though we do not pretend to say that that interpretation is universally accepted by our Courts of Law. He said:—

“No man had a right to publish and circulate such sentiments as those the defendant seemed to entertain, calculated as they were to undermine the religion and liberties of the subject. A man has a right to hold what opinions he chooses; but he is not at liberty to print them, if they are of a pernicious character. The principles of the defendant were so opposite to those which Christians usually believed in, that the propagation of them by the press would be dangerous to those fundamental doctrines of religion, on which their whole judicial system is based.”

Such language would be intelligible and consistent in the mouth of a Catholic judge, administering and expounding the laws of a Catholic country. But in Canada, which has no religious character, which maintains that it is desirable to do away with—“even the semblance of any connection” betwixt the State and religion—it is manifestly absurd. The very essence of Protestantism—in its theory at least—is that every man is not only at liberty to believe, but in matters of religion, to preach and publish what he will. It is upon this principle only, that the emissaries of the various Protestant proselytising societies can defend their attempts to “undermine the religion” of a Catholic people in Lower Canada; only upon this principle that an excuse can be set up for the “Soupers” of Ireland, or the agents of the Bible Society on the Continent of Europe. But if no one has a right to “undermine the religion” of the subject—if Mr. Rudolph is justly punished in Upper Canada for printing, publishing, and propagating “principles opposite to those which the majority of professing Christians in the Upper Province usually believe in”—then most just was the imprisonment of these interesting martyrs the Madiais—most salutary everywhere the action of the Popish Inquisition.

For what is the Inquisition? It is a tribunal especially appointed to inquire into all charges of “blasphemous libels against the Christian religion;” as, in Catholic countries, and according to Catholic principles, such offences are justly punishable by the civil magistrate—to whom, after conviction, the Inquisition hands over the “blasphemous libeler,” or him who has been convicted of publishing and promulgating pernicious doctrines “calculated to undermine the religion and liberties of the subject, or dangerous to the fundamental doctrines of religion on which their whole judicial system is based.” This Court or Tribunal is moreover composed, not as in the Protestant Inquisition of Upper Canada, of laymen—but of ecclesiastics and theologians; who have made the study of the doctrines of Christianity the special business of their lives; and who though individually fallible, yet as being in connection with, and in all their proceedings, controlled by, the infallible decisions of the Catholic Church, are competent to pronounce, with unerring certainty, what does, and what does not, constitute a “blasphemous libel” upon revealed truth. But it is evident, that a tribunal which has not, which does not even pretend to have, any certainty as to what constitutes “truth” in the religious or supernatural order, can not honestly arrogate to itself the right to sit in judgment upon the religious opinions of others, or to determine what is contrary to, or a libel upon, the supernatural truth which it has no means of ascertaining with infallible certainty.

We are not finding fault with the conviction of M. Rudolph. On the contrary; we admit that if guilty of the crime imputed to him, he justly deserved to be chastised by the secular arm. But we do find fault with the partiality with which our laws are administered; with that spirit which punishes a Rudolph, whilst, with fiendish yells, it hails the ribald blasphemies of a Gavazzi, an Achilli, a Nick Kirwan, an impure wretch like Leahy, and the rest of the honorable confraternity of evangelical converts from Popery. But we do wonder at the absurdity of a lay tribunal sitting in judgment upon a purely spiritual question; but we do wonder at such a trial in a country whose Legislature declares it desirable to place an eternal and impassable gulf betwixt the spiritual and the temporal; but we do wonder at a trial for blaspheming religious truth amongst a people who encourage, by every means in their power, such “blasphemous libels,” and reward the libelers; but we do wonder at a verdict of “Guilty” against M. Rudolph, from a jury which would, we have no doubt, have acquitted the Madiais, and given a public ovation to Gavazzi. Or rather we should not wonder at all; for what is there wonderful in the inconsistencies, the dishonesty, the untruthfulness, the tyranny, and absurdities of Protestantism?

Rather should we rejoice, that, by their own conduct, Protestants are compelled to admit the falsity of, and their own consciousness of the utter falsity of, their fundamental principle—the “right of private judgment,” and the consequent right of every man to preach as religious truth the findings of that “private judgment”—and to attempt to convert others to his peculiar religious views. This is the fundamental doctrine of Protestants when their object is to send their proselytising agents amongst a Catholic community; to scatter their “pernicious” doctrines amongst Catholics; to blaspheme and ridicule all that the latter hold sacred, and to circulate principles “calculated to undermine the Catholic religion.” In such a case indeed, there is no limit to “Freedom of Speech.”—Whether right or wrong in his opinions, the preacher or lecturer should be allowed—so Protestants will tell us—full and entire liberty of discussion; and the only weapons lawful to employ against him “are facts and logic. Now however we are told by the *Transcript* that “Freedom of Speech” the right to preach novel doctrines, and to proselytize, have

their limits—that a man may indeed believe as he likes; but that if, in fancied obedience to an inward divine command, “he set to burning down his neighbor’s house, destroying his belief, or breaking up his worship, he becomes guilty of a misdemeanor, requiring and deserving the correction of the law.” Now the *Transcript* is right; but why, we ask, if he hold such opinions, does he not recommend their practical application to the French Canadian Missionary Society, and the other agencies for “destroying the belief and breaking up the worship” of the French Canadians? He tells us too that, though a man may entertain infidel opinions, he must not be allowed to “inculcate them at the expense of the religious belief” of those among whom he dwells.—Here again we would beg of our cotemporary to apply his principles consistently. As thus—

That, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the consecrated Host is really and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of Our Lord Jesus Christ—“*ac proinde totum Christum*.”—*Conc. Trid. Sess. 13, can. 1.*—is just as certain as, that Christ is God, or that the Holy Ghost is a Divine Person;—for it is supported by precisely the same evidence and authority. To deny therefore any one of these Christian truths, is just as much an act of infidelity and blasphemy, as to deny them all. How then should they be dealt with, who, not believing in the Christian truth of Transubstantiation themselves—that is, who holding on this all-important question “infidel opinions”—endeavor to inculcate them at the expense of the religious belief of the French Canadians amongst whom they dwell? Why should M. Rudolph, in short, be handed over to the tender mercies of the Protestant Inquisition, whilst the far viler agents of the F. C. M. Society are allowed to stalk through the land, disgusting the simple people with their “blasphemous libels against the truths of religion?” If we are to have an Inquisition at all, let us at least know upon what principles it intends to act.

It would be well therefore, now that the Holy Tribunal is in active operation, if it would put forth, or cause to be put forth, with authority, a list of those “Christian truths which it is lawful to libel, and of those also against which not a word must be uttered under pain of fine and imprisonment. Such a work would be useful here, in Lower Canada, where it is quite uncertain to what extent it is lawful to publish “blasphemous libels” against the Christian religion; and where, in consequence, such blasphemies are daily published, and diligently circulated, to the great detriment of morality and religion, and to the dishonor of God’s Holy Name. We should like to know, for instance—if the truth of the Trinity may be assailed with the same coarse ribaldry as is the equally important, and equally certain “truth” of the “Real Presence” or “Transubstantiation?”—whether the doctrine of the Vicarious Atonement of Christ is as legitimate a subject for profane jesting as is the doctrine of the Intercession of the Saints, reigning in heaven with Christ?—whether, if it be lawful to deride Christ’s Mother, and to make obscene remarks upon her “Immaculate Conception,” it be equally lawful to crack nasty jokes upon her Son?—whether, in short, a monopoly of “blasphemy” is to be secured to the evangelical world?—or whether the truths of Catholicity are entitled to be treated with as much deference as the opinions of the sects? We pause for a reply.

DECREASE OF PROTESTANTISM IN THE UNITED STATES.

By this we do not mean that Catholicity is on the increase; or that Protestantism in the strict and logical sense of the word—that is, the “Denial of Catholicity”—is decreasing; but merely that, as a religious system, as a phase or modification of Christianity, Protestantism is fast dying out amongst our neighbors on the other side of the lines, and becoming more truly and consistently Protestant or negative in its character. This change we do not look upon as “entirely satisfactory;” nor has the Catholic any cause for congratulation, or triumph in the fact that infidelity is rapidly supplanting the emasculated system of religion hitherto professed by the sects. Even Methodism with all its extravagancies is better than the negation of all religion; and the most corrupt form of Christianity is to be preferred to that downright Atheism towards which the Protestantism of the United States is fast moving.

Of the fact of the decline of Protestantism, in this sense, we have abundant evidence in the journals of all denominations of professing Christians. Catholics also, it is true—from the scarcity of priests to attend to the religious wants of their people, and from the smallness and rarity of their places of worship, which again is owing to the poverty of the Catholic population—have to lament the loss of numbers of immortal souls. But the one complaint of the Catholic press is, that it is almost impossible to keep up with the wants of the people, or to find a sufficiency of church accommodation. The Catholic difficulty is, to find churches for congregations.

The very reverse is the case with our Protestant brethren. Their difficulty is, not to find churches for their congregations, but to find congregations for their churches. Of the latter they have abundance, and of ministers, and preachers, a superfluity; but alas! these can find none to attend upon their ministry. If Catholics are perishing from lack of pastors to break unto them the bread of life, Protestants are daily famishing in the midst of plenty—because they will not take and eat the food presented to them.—“What is to become of our people?”—is the cry of the Catholic, moved to compassion at the sight of a great multitude in a desert place, without victuals, and with none to give them to eat.—“What is to become of our churches?” eagerly enquires the Protestant, as he beholds Sunday after Sunday, a beg-

garly array of empty pews, or listens to the voice of the preacher gloomily echoing through the lonely and deserted aisles. “What is to become of our churches?”—is the problem which the Protestant clergy are trying to solve; for it is now certain that in numbers and in size they far exceed the wants of the Protestant people of the United States. “What is to become of ourselves? since there is no longer any man to listen to us?”

In support of our statements, we will cite a few extracts from the American Protestant press upon this subject; for which we are indebted to the *New York Christian Inquirer*, one of the most influential and best conducted of the number. In one issue of that journal—of the 10th instant—we find for instance the following:—

(From the Cincinnati Gazette.)

“The Presbyterian Herald published at Louisville, Ky., after enumerating some forty or fifty vacant churches in the West, belonging to the Presbyterian denomination, says:—

“There seems to be either too many great churches, or too few great men, as there are quite as many ministers without churches, as churches without ministers.”

“To the above might have been added the no less important fact, that one-half, or two-thirds of the churches that are supplied with preachers have very slim congregations; and very many of them have scarcely strength to keep together.”

This decay of congregations is in part attributed to the want of attraction in the preaching of the minister; thus admitting that, with Protestants, it is not the love of God and the desire of doing Him homage in the way of His appointment, that draws them to the church; but the desire of having their ears agreeably tickled, and their emotions pleasantly excited, by the eloquence of man. Their worship is Pulpit, not Altar worship; they go to hear a lecture, not to serve God; and their adoration is given to the preacher, rather than to Him in Whose name he professes to address them. Therefore the *Cincinnati Gazette* recommends, as the only cure for the evil of which he complains, that a more eloquent set of preachers be engaged—“men who by their eloquence and ability, will attract people to church.” At present, he adds, their humdrum discourses render the house of worship generally unacceptable.

The Methodists are no better off than are the Presbyterians, in spite of the “Revivals, Camp Meetings” and other modes of excitement, to which the former have resource in order to render the worship of God attractive. Thus in another column, under the head, “Decline of Methodism,” we read:

“The decrease of Methodism, both in England and in the places of its earliest triumphs in this country, is a fact so remarkable as naturally to excite inquiry as to its causes. Its origin in the movements of Wesley, its rapid extension, its lively and animating spirit, the zeal of its ministry diffusing itself among the masses, are matters of history. Having arrived at its culminating point, the evidences of its decline are too obvious to admit of concealment.”

Then a writer in one of the Episcopalian organs complains of the difficulty of converting the New Englanders to Episcopalianism. “The expense,” he says “of making a Churchman out of such materials, makes the article in this neighborhood comparatively scarce.”

The Independents or Congregationalists sing the same sad song. By way of showing that the latter are not exempt from the universal curse of barrenness, the *N. Y. Christian Inquirer* copies the following—under the significant caption—“What Is To Become Of Our Churches?”—from an article in the *Independent*:—

“WHAT IS TO BECOME OF OUR CHURCHES?—I observed in a late *Independent* a statement of the progress, or rather depreciation of the Congregational churches in New-Hampshire and Vermont the past twelve years. Maine might have been placed in the same category. We have numerous organizations and appliances of a religious nature; Missionary, Bible, Tract, Education Societies. Also sermons, Sabbath-schools, and Prayer-meetings; and various additional moral machinery, operating almost at every fire-side. And yet no millennium comes! And yet, in regard to numbers, the churches retrograde! Now, something about this is wrong. I may not be able to designate the wrong, but this I know, something is wrong. Indeed it is but too obvious that the absence of the Holy Ghost is our precise difficulty. This (as well as in other ways) is indicated by our preaching characteristics. To say nothing of others, Congregational preachers, at present, give very slight indications of being “filled with the Spirit.” So at least it is in this region. On the Sabbath we attend to the reading from the pulpit of good, well-constructed, religious essays. These readings usually occupy some 30 minutes; a portion of the audience sleep, another portion gaze around upon their associates, and a third portion criticize the composition.”

Then in another paper we read how the New Hampshire State Convention of this body was held on the 16th ult.; and how in its Report it announces to the world, that, in spite of the great increase in population;—

“We have but 8,000 more members than we had a quarter of a century ago, and we have between two and three thousand less than we had twelve years ago. In 1843, we reported a total of 10,647; and in 1854, a total of only 8,229.”

Then the Baptists strike in; but still to the same tune. Their organ, the *True Union*, tells us that their churches—“yield an annual revenue of about 22,000 deceived souls to perdition”—whilst about 13,000 are annually “dismissed by letter, and what becomes of them?” And the *True Union* adds—that the great mass “neglect all their religion, break all their baptismal engagements, and mingle again with an ungodly world.”

Another Baptist journal, the *Examiner*, corroborates the testimony of the *True Union*. He says:—

“Look at a few facts. The city of New York and its vicinity have increased in population within the last five years, to an extent that has surprised all classes of men. Yet the number of communicants in the Baptist churches of New York and its suburbs in 1855, is less than it was in 1850. Death, discipline, and removal, have taken larger numbers out of the churches than have been brought into them by letter, restoration, and baptism; and, that, too, while the population has been increasing by tens of thousands from year to year! It is doubtful whether we are now numerically as