

CONSIDERATIONS OF CATHOLISM, BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.

Sacred Heart Review.—CCXCV.

This Boston gentleman goes on to say: "For a Frenchman there was something very piquant in studying and setting forth that singular episode in the dead-and-alive anglican state Church, sixty odd years ago, which resulted in the desertion of their native and maturely adopted religion by half a dozen acute and well-bred English scholars, who proceeded to put themselves at the service of Italian cardinals and fanatical priests of many nations."

This passage, although temperate in terms, betrays, and evidently is not meant to conceal, the extreme dislike felt by the writer, by no means to the persons of the oxford converts to Rome, but to their conversion. This displeasure is so strong as to overbear the author's ingenuousness, (which is hardly his strong point anyhow) and, I fear we must say, to damage even his veracity.

Surely it is hardly the instinct of truthfulness which has made him bring down the Oxford conversions to a poor half-dozen. The most disparaging Protestant estimate of their number, and this given some twelve or fifteen years ago, allows that they would fill "one large parish church." This of course includes the many clergy men, the many laymen, and the still greater number of women of the upper classes. They form one body, and are the direct sequel to Newman, and of Ward and Manning, and of their earliest associates. The later accessions to Roman Catholicism in England have been less immediately the results of this first great impulse.

Surely, also, it is hardly the spirit of truth which would bring down the intellectual eminence of Newman, or indeed of Manning and Ward, to a mere concession that they were acute and well-bred. In fact the latter part hardly applies in full to Newman. It has been remarked, that while he and Manning were both of mercantile families, he never caught so distinctly as Manning the tone of high breeding from his university life.

Certainly it is not mere acuteness which has given to Cardinal Newman that wonderful perfection of style of which everybody speaks. Still less is it mere acuteness which enabled him, as Justin McCarthy says with truth, to check the progress of Protestantism in England, a check from which we can not well say that it has yet recovered. At all events the older Protestantism, negative, and bitterly polemical founded on the assumption that Rome is the mystery of Iniquity, while it may still have life in German scholarship, has very little left in English. Its present representatives are such men as the late Mr. Kensit, and its literary organs such sheets as the 'Rock' and the English Churchman, which it would provoke a smile to describe as having anything to do with the world of thought.

The profoundness of the change is well noted in the eminent Non-conformist and Calvinist, Principal Fairburn. This gentleman is so far from inclining to Roman Catholicism, or Anglo-Catholicism, that he is a leader in this queer movement of "passive resistance" to the Education Act. Yet he is so far again from having discovered that Rome is the Man of Sin (a character which historic Protestantism ascribes to it at least from the death of St. Gregory, and often from the time of St. Sylvester; the great Lutheran Flacius, indeed, going back to St. Peter himself) that he describes this great See as having inherited from Caesar the instinct of Empire and from Christ the power of regenerating faith, and as having in early times, by means of her temper of domination, cut the way through the oppositions of secular principalities and temporal interests, to make room for her work of spiritual renewal.

True, he views her influence in the present much less favorably, but his opinion of her ancient and medieval work marks an essential distinction between him, with his following of thinking Congregation-

alists, and Protestantism as even I remember it sixty years ago. Among the English Baptists too, Dr. Shakespeare, who is certainly not one of their least men, remarks that while the Roman Catholic theories are not those which he holds, he cannot understand how it is lawful to regard a Church to which such multitudes of excellent Christians adhere otherwise than with reverent brotherliness.

It may be well that John Henry Newman has not seriously checked the progress of such a Protestantism as this, as indeed he greatly rejoiced over the Free Church movement in Scotland; but if he has permanently checked the rancorous Protestantism of the elder time, even at the cost of carrying off a large body of influential recruits to his own camp, I don't think we need shed very many tears over the event.

It is a rather curious conjunction which this gentleman gives us when he reproaches these "acute and well-bred scholars" with having deserted "their native and maturely adopted religion." Somehow the two accusations do not seem to hold together very well. Let us examine them.

If it is a moral fault to give up one's 'native' religion, then all the great religions of the world, Hinduism and Parsism, are in a bad way. None of the others are even relatively primitive. *Judaism itself, as Moses reminds us, was, a certain qualified sense, a reaction from Babylonian idolatry. Christianity, as viewed from without, is a reaction from Pharisaical Judaism and is bitterly reproached in the Talmud for its "heresy." Mohammedanism is a revolt from Arabian heathenism. Buddhism is a reaction from Brahminical sacerdotalism and caste.

Now ought we really to reproach the Buddhists that they gave up their native Brahmanism for a religion so much milder and more moral; or the Arabs that they surrendered their three hundred and sixty gods and goddesses for the worship of the one God, however imperfectly conceived; or the Hebrews that they turned away from the Gods "whom our fathers served beyond the Euphrates" to the ancestral and never wholly interrupted worship of the one Jehovah; or the Apostles that they turned away from the Rabbins to follow the Saviour; or the Greeks and Romans that they gave up Jupiter and Juno and Venus and Priapus for the purity of Christ? Yet all these deserted their "native religion." Indeed when Africans abandoned Fetichism or Tartars Shamanism, for the Gospel, they too, "desert their native religion." I wonder if this gentleman is proposing an anti-missionary expedition, to recon-vert the apostate negroes to their sorcerers, or the Christian Greenlanders to their angikoks, in the sacred name of "native religion."

To confine ourselves to Christendom, what did Luther and Calvin and Kramer and Knox, whom this gentleman unquestionably views as spiritual heroes, do in bringing in the Reformation but to forsake their "native religion?" If they might commendably follow a new doctrine, surely Newman and Manning and Watd and their fellows are equally free to revert to the old. Antiquity, as St. Cyprian says, is no certain test of truth, but neither is novelty. If men are sometimes justified in being disgusted with old systems, they are often justified in being disgusted with new. The new light may prove to be a star, but then again it often turns out to be a will-o'-the-wisp.

However, the reformers would of said that their "native religion" was Christianity, and that, they were so far from having deserted this that they had simply reverted to its earliest purity. It provokes a mixture of amusement and loath-

ing, when there is talk about "a reversion to earliest purity" in the name of Luther, when we remember certain teachings of his, which he made an integral part of his gospel, and which, as he himself allows, did much more to shape the lives of his disciples than anything that he taught them out of the New Testament.

It was in reality the Oxford converts, who, not "deserting their native religion," but adhering most firmly to it, were solicitous to return to its earliest purity. Dr. Newman has distinctly signified in his "Loss and Gain," that it was the discovery that Evangelicalism, following Luther, taught that "believers obey the law, but are not bound to do so," which drove him into the Church which, as he found, teaches that "Availing Faith is that which is made Operative by Love." Perhaps I may be allowed to suggest to this gentleman that St. Paul considerably antedates Martin Luther, and that reversion is not desertion.

The Oxford converts have not exhausted their significance for us yet.

CHARLES C. STARBUCK. Andover, Mass.

*The Church teaches that the worship of the one only God, not Hinduism or Parsism, was the primitive religion. Although the Hebrews not a few fell often into idolatry, yet the knowledge and the worship of the true God never disappeared from the earth.—Ed. Review.

ARE WE PRIEST RIDDEN?

From the statistics of the various religious bodies in the United States, published in the "Christian Advocate," of January 19, it appears that the average number of ministers for the various Protestant sects is one to every 125 members, nearly six times as great as that of the Catholic Church, one to every 736 members, and nearly four times as great as that of rabbis for the Jews, one to 475. Indeed, if the Advocate had given the official figures from the Catholic directory, nearly twelve, instead of nine millions, the average 1 to 125 would be fully eight times our own, since we really have but one priest to about every 1,000 souls. If we could ever ascertain the number of all who have been at one time Protestant ministers, and who are now engaged in other careers, in business and in politics, whether as members of Congress, of our state legislatures, or as consuls in foreign parts, the numbers would be altogether out of proportion.—Minister vs. Priest-Ridden People, in the April Messenger.

CANADA'S DIVORCE LAWS.

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THE CHURCH IN ART.

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