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## The Church Herald.

TORONTO, THURSDAY, JAN. 29, 1874.

### VOTING BY BALLOT.

Now that the ballot system of voting at parliamentary elections is likely soon to be introduced into the Province of Ontario, and perhaps into the elections for the Dominion parliament, any information upon the comparative merits of the system must be regarded as a matter of interest to many. At the outset we may be justified in saying that in practice the ballot has not been found to work so well as the theory promised. This consideration, however, ought not of itself to be sufficient ground for rejecting the ballot. The truth is, its advocates have placed too high a value upon it. They have praised the system beyond its merits, and the result of the inevitable disappointment is a kind of natural rebound in depreciation of a practice which has its faults as well as advantages. Much depends upon the circumstances under which it is used. The principle upon which it rests is, of course, secrecy in voting. In ancient Greece the practice was very generally followed. By the secret votes of the people—called *ostracism*—any person obnoxious to the commonwealth could be banished into exile, a practice at one time quite common among the Athenians. Whether, on the whole, it worked beneficially in the Grecian States, is a question which has been much disputed. The advocates of the ballot have on their side the authority of Grote, who in his History of Greece, states his opinion that the right of *ostracism* was a wholesome one, and in general beneficially exercised. The law of secret voting was introduced into ancient Rome during the Era of the Republic; and historians of high authority express opinions unfavorable to its effect upon the institutions of that country. Thus Gibbon in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," places the introduction of the ballot amongst the prominent causes which led to the overthrow of the republic. He declares that the beneficial relations of patron and client were destroyed by the system of secret voting; that public confidence was thus undermined, and that suspicion and distrust followed with sinister results.

In modern times the use of the ballot has been generally adopted in the affairs of private clubs and joint stock and other companies, in which secrecy of voting is in many cases absolutely essential, and where its propriety is universally admitted. With much more doubtful propriety the principle has in a few instances been introduced into legislative proceedings. Examples of this application of the principle may be found in the history of Venice, where it was used in the Senate, also in Scotland in the reign of Charles II. In the latter case the plan seems to have been suggested by the contests between the crown and parliament in those troublesome times, and was adopted by the members of the popular body to secure them against the rough consequences of opposing the will of the sovereign. This use of the ballot is now admitted on all hands to be wrong, and there is no probability of its revival.

In elections by the people, of their representatives in the Legislature, the question still remains open, as to the comparative merits of the rival systems of secret and open voting. We are inclined to think that modern experience, so far, has not strengthened the position of those who advocate the ballot. In Australia it has been in force for some time, but the circumstances under which it has been practised there are such as to render the experiment of very little value upon the question as affecting other countries. In the United States and England, however, its working may be looked to as furnishing some test of the merits and demerits of the system. With respect to the United States, we believe the preponderating opinion is that the ballot has worked badly. In the State of New York, undoubtedly the system has been open to great abuse, and the most flagrant frauds have been perpetrated under cover of secret voting. The supposed advantages of the ballot rest upon the assumption that it prevents intimidation and secures to the voter the opportunity of a free and unbiased exercise of the franchise. But it may well be doubted whether it has this effect. In England the demand for the ballot was based upon the alleged intimidation of individuals over many people, such as that of landlords over their tenants. The latter were more or less dependent upon the former for the tenure of their lands, and this relationship between landlord and tenant was thought to furnish landlords with undue power of influencing the votes of the tenants. It was proposed to strike away this influence by introducing the law of secret voting. Now it is clear that this reason for the ballot never existed in the United States, where intimidation by individuals over a class is a thing unknown. There the only kind of intimidation comes from the opposite direction, and consists in the moral coercion of individuals by the crowd. This kind of influence has not been removed by the ballot. Whether by fair means or foul it comes to the pretty generally known how people vote, and the veil of secrecy supposed to be furnished by the ballot is more imaginary than real. On the other hand, the stories we have so often heard from the American press of the fraudulent personation of voters, "stuffing" the ballot box, and fraudulent returns, are real evils which are possible only under the ballot system, and have given rise to a strong feeling against it. If it is answered that this abuse could scarcely prevail to any serious extent in other countries, say in England, we are by no means certain that such answer would be well founded. In England the ballot has been in force only about two years, a period scarcely long enough to afford it a fair trial. A significant fact, however, in relation to the question is that the same party who were instrumental in carrying the ballot bill are now advocating its repeal. We refer to the radical section of the Liberal party. This section of Mr. Gladstone's supporters demanded the ballot as a measure of party tactics, under the impression it would help them in the elections. The landed proprietors as a rule belonged to the Conservative party, and it was supposed they were by the former system able to intimidate their tenants. It was to neutralise this intimidation that the Liberals called for the law of secret voting. The measure, however, has not had the effect they expected. On the contrary several constituencies that under the system of open voting were in the habit of returning Liberal candidates, have under the ballot system elected Conservatives. Hence the same party who promoted the introduction of secret voting in England are now promoting its repeal. In addition to this it is said that a scheme has been devised for practically evading the spirit of the ballot act. We are informed that a Mr. Joseph Cowen has offered himself as a candidate in the Liberal interest at Newcastle, and that his friends have issued a circular inviting voters to sign a pledge in the following words:—"It is my intention to record my vote for Mr. Joseph Cowen at the ensuing election." Of course those who refuse to sign the pledge will be considered as opponents; and the pressure that can be brought to bear, to obtain a signature may amount to intimidation as effectual as

any that could be exercised under the system of open voting. It may be said that the voter may sign the paper and then vote the other way under cover of the ballot; but this supposition involves a breach of morality more damaging in its effects than the worst intimidation, and would furnish a poor argument for the ballot. Our space is far too limited to enable us to go into all the arguments pro and con that apply to this question. If the ballot is to be introduced into Canada, we hope it may meet with greater success than has attended the system in the United States and England.

### RELIGIOUS BELIEF.

A very popular idea prevails in many quarters at the present time, that it is a matter of little importance what a man believes, so long as he lives right. The principle is a very plausible one, and is held by many good men who profess a general acceptance of the Bible. Nevertheless the doctrine is a most dangerous one, and those who hold it would seem to occupy a position half way between truth and infidelity, with a tendency towards the latter. It equally ignores belief in the authority of the church and in justification by faith alone. If theology signifies a right conception of God and His attributes in relation to man, then theology is held as a matter of no account by the advocates of salvation by good living. In this connection

the term theology, as signifying the Christian belief in the living truths of Holy Scripture. One of the most striking illustrations of the irreligious tendency of the age is this very notion of substituting the personal merits of men which requires no particular religious belief, for the great plan of redemption taught by the church. The importance of a sound religious belief can scarcely be exaggerated, whether we regard its influence upon individual character and individual conduct, or upon the community as a whole. Those who be little creeds and magnify good living, seem quite ignorant of the great influence of religious thought upon the actions of men. They begin at the wrong end of the question. Their favourite saying is that men will best acquire knowledge of Christ by living up to the spirit of His teaching. But how are they to live up to the spirit of His teaching unless they know what His teaching is? And how are we to know His Holy will unless by the means which He has appointed? The whole argument of the opponents of systematic theology is based on an erroneous conception of the origin or basis of the system. They compare it with scientific truth. They tell us that different branches of knowledge require different faculties of the human organization; that in mathematics the process is by deduction, that in natural sciences this faculty must be mixed with the inductive process; that when we enter the regions of metaphysics, other methods of observation have to be employed; but yet in all these paths of learning only the intellectual faculties are brought into play. And then by way of distinction and as making a great point, they gravely assure us that when we come to the question of the Divine nature, and man's relations with it, we must employ not only the intellectual but the moral and spiritual faculties. That is to say, when men undertake to "construct a theology" an exclusive reliance on logical, irrational and delusive. This is fit to their position. They are thinking of theological creeds as being something arrived at by the ingenuity of man; in the same way as they are accustomed to associate the wonderful discovery of the planetary system, the circulation of the blood, or the laws of gravitation, with the genius of Galileo, of Harvey, or of Newton.

As to theological systems constructed by men we have nothing to say in their defence, but leave them to all the objections that anti-theologians can well bring against them. But we would ask those gentlemen who talk of right living as something altogether disconnected with right thinking, by what standard are they to regulate their living? Is each individual to determine for himself what is right? and is he to be taught nothing before he is old enough to decide for himself? Those of them who profess belief in Bible Revelation must admit the necessity of going there for instruction. But is the Bible itself not a system of theology?

and is the enunciation by the Church of Christ of the leading points for belief as taught by His word, in the form of a creed to be rejected by men, merely because they think they are wiser than the Church? The fact is there is both confusion and mischievousness of those who reject church creeds. After all, men's opinions and actions are closely connected. If you would teach them how to live, teach them what to believe. "Train up a child in the way he should go;" train him by reference to the highest standard, the teaching of Christ, make sure what that teaching is by pursuing the means appointed by Christ himself for that purpose. It is quite true that by using the means of grace which He has ordained His holy spirit will help us, and we thus get nearer to Him, and obtain clear conceptions of our duty. By this means, we learn and practice the best kind of living, by this means we are guided and directed, and may hope to escape the rocks and sands that beset our course; by this means we avoid the dangers surrounding those who rely upon their own instinctive impression of what is right, and who in their ignorance and presumption make that impression the only standard of theology.

### RELIGIOUS THEORIES.

The lecture delivered last month by Professor Max Muller at Westminster Abbey, by consent of the Dean, has caused a considerable amount of criticism. The subject of the lecture was nominally the missionary cause, but it seems to have resolved itself rather into the discussion of religious theories. The treatment of it by the Professor was intended as from a kind of scientific standpoint. He prefaced his argument by reference to the fact of the small number of religions which have obtained any permanence in the world. He enumerated the principal creeds as the Jewish, the Christian, the Mahomedan, the Brahmin, the Buddhist, and the Parsee. As a general classification for the purposes of his lecture, he divided religions into missionary and non-missionary. Under the former heading he placed the Christian, the Mahomedan and Buddhist—and the latter the Jewish, Brahmin and Parsee. Speaking of the missionary class he attached great importance to what he called their missionary characteristics, and expressed the opinion that if they ceased to be missionary they would cease to exist. He considered those which are not missionary as suffering rapid decadence. As between the three great missionary religions, he thought there would yet be a contest for supremacy. To missionary enterprise he ascribed the highest and noblest character. He divided the work into two great forms, the parental or domestic, and the controversial. The former seeks to win by love, by example, and by personal influence, but not by discussion. A most singular feature of the lecture, considering the place in which and the circumstances under which it was delivered, (day of intercession for the mission cause) was an omission to give that prominence and preference to the Christian religion over that of other systems which Christians claim for their faith. The Professor seemed rather to infer that there was perhaps some good in all of them. There was not, to say the least, what we might have expected, that explicit denunciation of false religions, the overthrow of which is one of the great objects of Christian missionary labour. The probability is the Professor's religion is more a matter of the intellect than of the heart.

It is no doubt a good plan to take a wide range of any subject with which we are dealing; it seems to us that Professor Muller took a very wide range. In fact he seems to have radiated so wide from the centre of his theme, that his hearers must have been in some doubt as to the precise point he wished to make, or the specific lesson he wished to teach. The lesson conveyed, whether intended by the professor or not, would seem to be, that the great missionary religions of the world stand upon much the same footing, and have nearly equal chances of final success; the question of ultimate supremacy depending upon the amount of missionary enterprise that may mark the efforts of each. The whole lecture was no doubt very able, very eloquent, and very

learned. As respects, however, the great question whether Christianity, Mahomedanism or Buddhism is ultimately to prevail, a very simple solution suggests itself to our minds, and that is that the Christian religion is God's Truth, and must prevail over every system which is based on the superstition, the ignorance, or the heavity of men. Very likely the Professor would have considered this view of the case rather stale for him, but in the search after originality of treatment, it is always well, even at the risk of being trite, to avoid the appearance of lending support to the superstition of the age.

### AMERICAN EDUCATION.

Some of the American religious papers are discussing the education question in the United States. They consider that some of the principal evils that exist there spring from popular ignorance. Threatened enlargement of the criminal class, pauperism, and political degeneracy are amongst the evils ascribed to this cause; and statistics are quoted to show that criminals are in general illiterate; and compulsory education after the Prussian plan is recommended. We think, however, conclusions drawn from statistics on this question, are extremely unreliable, both as to the amount of actual immorality and as to the class responsible for crime. It is no doubt true that the poor and illiterate have not the same facility of evading the law and escaping punishment as their social superiors. Hence the Criminal Calendar which embraces the criminal caught, but excludes the many thousands at large, is a most imperfect test. Besides, in the discussion of this question, so far as we have seen, there are important considerations left out. The causes of immorality and consequently of crime spring to a large extent from the classes that are educated. However disproportionate the numbers of the educated class may be, compared with the ignorant, the former are generally responsible for the moral sentiment of the community. Now it is obvious that upon that sentiment greatly depends the extent and intensity of the three evils referred to. For example, a grasping, grinding avarice; an unhalloved greed of money; love of voluptuous pleasure, and sensual extravagance; contracting debts without the means or expectation of paying them; gambling and drunkenness; blunting of the moral sense by a general laxity in the enforcement of the criminal law; these are the causes that largely operate to swell the Criminal Calendar, and furnish the statistics upon which moralists would fasten the character of vice on the illiterate, who are in reality but the victims of a vicious system for which the educated classes are responsible. Ignorance is in itself an undoubted evil, and education should by all means be promoted. But then the quality as well as the quantity should be attended to. Secular education however widely diffused it may be, and under any system, however compulsory, will not establish a pure national morality. The education must be applied to the moral and religious, as well intellectual faculties, and must be based on the elevating principles of the Christian religion, in order to remove the evils so justly complained of in the United States.

—The Registrar-General of London reported the death of 780 persons on account of the late fog. The London Spectator thereupon moralizes as follows:—"We are very glad indeed to hear that 780 Londoners above the average died the week before last of the fog. We do not want them to die, of course, but if they were to die, it is better that they should die of the fog, and so get rid at once of the superstition that the most disagreeable, inconvenient, dangerous, and spirit-depressing visitation which falls on Londoners is somehow 'good for us.' It is not good for us, any more than for cattle, but had, as the registrar's return shows. There is no cure for it except retreat into warm rooms, and we strongly recommend the sanitary reformers to provide them at other people's expense, of course, and pass an act compelling all Londoners to stop in them under penalty of a month. A compulsory use of respirators at £2 a piece would also answer the end sought."

—Eliza Cook, the poetess, is in bad health. She is now living at Wimbledon, England, and Christmas-eve was her fifty-fifth birthday. She enjoys a well-earned literary pension of £100 a year.