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Protestantism and Romanism in Public Life.

PROFESSOR GEORGE H. SCHODDE, PH. D.

THROUGHOUT Protestant Germany and in the Lutheran Church of this country, the 31st of October is celebrated as a holiday. It was on that day in the year 1517 that the Monk of Wittenberg nailed his ninety five theses against Papal indulgences to the Castle church door of the University town, and thereby inaugurated the greatest intellectual, spiritual and ecclesiastical revolution of the history of the Christian Church since the apostolic era. Nothing is more timely than to impress with new emphasis upon the mind and heart of Protestant Christianity the deep significance and far reaching bearing of that reformation and restoration of the faith once delivered unto the saints. Rome has indeed changed her methods and modernized them; but her goal and aim is the same, just as her claims to be the sole representative of Christianity are the same as they were when the mighty Gospel heroes of the sixteenth century shook her from turret to foundation stone.

If, however, history and experience are to furnish the data for the judgment as to the outcome of the struggle of Romanism and Protestantism, then this outcome is not at all uncertain. For nearly four hundred years these two great rival religious communions have contended for the control over the factors, forces and agents that direct the thought and life of modern civilization, and although vastly the superior numerically the Roman Catholic Church has been vastly outstripped in this race by the Protestant. The spiritual truths and teachings of the latter have, in directing the destinies of nations, in the formation of their ideas and ideals, exercised a power with which even the splendid organization of the Roman Catholics has not been able to compete. The comparative history of the two Churches in the annals of civilization is only another proof of the fact that in the ups and downs of thought and life, not mere majorities and physical superiority, but thought, truth and ideals obtain the mastery.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century was more than a religious movement. In the nature of the case it could not have been otherwise. It is one of the clearest teachings of the philosophy of history that of all the factors that are active in directing the destinies of men, both as individuals and as communities, the religious is the most powerful, transcending even the influence of kinship, family, language and nationality. Religion, if it is genuine, brings under its spell the whole man in the entirety of his thought, life and being. It is simply unthinkable that a religious agitation like that of the Reformation should not have worked radical changes in the civilization and culture, the sciences and arts, the literature, the philosophy, the education and all other expressions and agencies of human activity and progress. In civilization the demarcation line between the middle and the modern ages is marked by the Reformation. The characteristic difference between the two consists in this, that in the former the spirit of Roman Catholicism predominated, in the latter the spirit of Protestantism. The aggressive and progressive factor in modern civilization has sprung from the sacred soil of Wittenberg and Geneva. In this development there has been decidedly the rule of the minority. The Roman Catholic

Church has since the sixteenth century not only not exerted an influence anything at all in proportion to her millions of adherents, but she has, on the whole, assumed only a defensive and negative position over against the progress and achievements of modern science and culture and learning, either ignoring these as much as possible or adjusting her fixed and settled ideas to them as best she could. At most she has antagonized them and assumed a hostile position over against them. A positive and aggressive force in modern civilization at large or in special lines the Church of Rome has not been. It is a singular yet deeply instructive fact that in none of the departments controlling modern life and thought—not in politics, not in literature, not in philosophy, not in science or learning of any kind, not in journalism, nor in education—does the leadership and directing power lie in the hands of the Roman Church. She utilizes all these agencies for her own purposes, but does so not as their mistress, but as best she may, and quasi under compulsion and in self-defence.

It is a noteworthy fact that those three countries which are beyond any and every doubt the leading powers on the globe, namely, England, Germany and the United States, are distinctly Protestant in character; not, indeed, in the sense that they have no Roman Catholic subjects, but because in their development the principles of Protestantism prevail. In France, notwithstanding the entente secured lately, those in authority have no sympathy for the Vatican and its wishes. Italy, ever since 1870, has been engaged in an endless struggle with the Pope. Austro-Hungary, the only Catholic power that seems to show any tendency towards favouring the plans of the Vatican, is in daily danger of disintegration from innate weakness, resulting from the heterogeneous conglomerate of nationalities, languages and interests that constitute it. Especially instructive in this line is the attitude assumed by Catholics and Protestants where both have the same opportunity of utilizing forces of the greatest value to them. In higher education the leadership of the world belongs to Germany. The twenty-one German universities, although fully half a dozen of them have Roman Catholic theological faculties, are thoroughly imbued with Protestant principles and the Protestant spirit of progress. At a Catholic Congress in Germany, held some time ago, a prominent speaker declared that outside of the theological faculty, only a single professor in the University of Freiburg, generally regarded as a Catholic institution, could be regarded as a faithful son of the Church. Catholic scholars have access to university positions on the same terms that Protestants have, as a reward for literary and scholastic prominence; yet a Roman Catholic university professor in other departments than the theological is a "rare bird." Again, while the Roman Catholics of Germany constitute about one third of the population, that Church contributes only one fifth or less to the university attendants and to the professional careers.

Data and facts like these go to show, that the struggle between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism is a great deal wider than a purely religious and ecclesiastical contest, and that in this wider sphere of human thought and activity, Protestant principles have been and still are the predominating elements.