

CONSIDERATIONS OF CATHOLICISM BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.

Sacred Heart Review—CCLXXXV.

A Catholic paper, of the same city with the 'Diary,' complains that the Baptists hate the Catholics with peculiar animosity, and that the 'Diary' hates them with peculiar animosity even for the Baptists.

The 'Diary' does not seriously dispute the charge. Indeed, it seems rather to glory in it. It assures its Catholic neighbor that Baptists in general and the two editors in particular never lose out of mind what befell the Admiral, and the other French Protestants. Moreover, it assures the Catholic paper that as beyond doubt the Church of Rome, had she her old power, would deal with Protestants in her old fashion, they themselves mean to keep on watching and hating the Papists in the good old evangelical style. The phrases are not quite so plain as I have put them, but the substance is plain enough.

Now a good memory is a very convenient thing, and these two editors have an uncommonly happy one for their purposes. They are equally ready, as we have seen, to remember things that have never happened, and to forget things that have, but which it is not expedient to remember. That surely is a peculiarly felicitous memory which, where it has nothing to recollect, can invent, and where recollection is awakened, can sublimely forget.

We will presently examine some instances of this editorial faculty of the 'Diary.' However, postponing that for just now, I will say that, on their own showing, I do not see why they need concern themselves particularly about the Catholics. There are dangers nearer at hand. They cite with sympathetic approbation somebody's remark that there are only two schools of Christian thought, the Baptist and the Romanist. Sometimes, they remark, other Protestants try to show some slight difference of trend between themselves and the Catholics proper, but they intimate that these efforts to make out a difference where there is none to speak of amount to very little.

Now since in their view 'Romanism' is persecuting in its very essence, and since, as they have it, all Christians but themselves are Romanists, they ought to be in mortal terror lest Paedobaptist Protestants, Catholics and Greeks should temporarily suspend their trifling differences—as these view them—and jointly address themselves to exterminating the Baptist heresy. Yet as Protestants have long since given up the effort, and Catholics mostly let the Baptists alone, and even Russians rather persecute them politically than theologically, I do not see but that they ought to make out that "Romanism," whatever it may have been in the fierce old days, is now a very mild and harmless thing, of which they need not be at all afraid.

Certain it is that they freely admit Protestant Paedobaptists, whom they explain to be only slightly differentiated "Romanists" to their pulpits, and freely join with them in their devotional meetings, and in all manner of philanthropic and religious endeavors that do not involve sacramental intercommunion. Then as they declare Protestants generally to be Romanists with a slight variation, it follows that they are bound to regard Roman Catholicism as also a good and Christian thing, and to look for a speedy interfusion of all pious efforts with it, excepting only Baptism and the Communion, which they reserve to themselves as the Urim and Thummim of their specific highpriestly pre-eminence in Christendom.

It is certain that, logically, they ought either to declare that Protestantism—except their own—is of a persecuting nature, or that Catholicism, which they hold to differ so little from it, is not. They ought either to speak of Catholics as "our beloved brethren, rejoicing with us in the light and truth of the common Gospel although subject to certain obscurations of its

fulness, such as we find also in Presbyterians and Methodists," or they ought, like the earlier Scottish Baptists, to refuse to have anything to do, religiously, with Paedobaptists of any description whatever.

Nevertheless, whoever should expect that he could bind these two leaders of the Baptist synagogue by any congruity of logic would find that he had entirely mistaken their character and purposes. Their fundamental purpose, doubtless, is to sell their paper, and if calling other Protestants, one week, slightly disguised Romanists, and the next beloved evangelical brethren, will fill their pocketbook, they will go back and forth between the two styles of speech as often as they find it opportune.

Their secondary purpose is, to promote the interests of a sullen, growling sectarianism, unamiable towards other Protestants, and mendacious and malignant towards Roman Catholics. They do not any more believe than one of us that the difference between Protestants and Catholics is slight. But if they wish to make other Protestants feel uncomfortable—as they often do—then these are Romanists with a little difference. On the other hand, when they wish to vent their spitefulness on the Catholics, they can easily forget all this, and represent Protestantism as one blessed and unanimous brotherhood of "evangelical light and truth"—a phrase which I borrow from a private note of one of the editors—before whose invincible power the black and bloody forces of "Romanism" are soon to go down.

The Free Baptists, a much smaller body, are a plain people, who make few pretensions to high social cultivation. Yet they are so pervaded by the spirit of fraternity towards other Christians that, although they reject aspersion and infant baptism for themselves, they scruple even to call them invalid. They prefer saying with the "Morning Star": "These are invalid to us," but they are valid to our Paedobaptist brethren. Therefore they admit Paedobaptists freely to intercommunion, and to most of the rights of church membership. And while they are very intense Protestants, I have never found any difficulty in moving them to historical corrections, or to favorable restatements of Catholic doctrine. This is what it is to have the real instinct of Christian brotherhood.

On the other hand, the 'Diary' is not content to say—which would give no cause of offence—that infant baptism, in their view, is "invalid." It can not be happy without saying that it is "ridiculous." The editors know that this epithet has no force of argument, and that it is used against men and women who are as good Christians as any Baptists, as well grounded in Scripture, and as honestly desirous of following the mind of Christ. But blackguards will be blackguards through and through. As holy Isaiah says, (in a mitigated version): Let favor be shown to the churl, yet will he still deal churlishly.

Of course, as I have said before, these remarks are not to be applied to other editors, or to the Professors of Baptist Colleges and seminaries, or to very many thousands of firmly convinced, but genuinely Christian Baptists, of either sex.

The 'Diary' assures its Catholic neighbor that Baptists, especially these two editors, do not forget what happened to the Admiral. True. They take great pains not to forget it, as is their right. Only they take great pains not to remember that Coligni—a great and noble man—in his death was only reaping what he had sown in his life. Ten years before, by his own avowal, he had long entertained in his camp the fanatical Protestant Poltrót, who signified to him, and to all the camp, his fixed intent to murder the great Duke of Guise, a man whom the Protestant Guizot places, for grandeur and worthiness of character, on very much the same plane as the Admiral, except that he seems never to have been an accomplice in assassination. Coligni said nothing to encourage Poltrót, and he owns

that he said nothing to dissuade him. He owns to having given him a hundred crowns to buy him a swift horse, in the hope—which proved futile—of escape after the deed of blood.*

This is the seed planted by Coligni's own hand, which after ten years came up in his own death, and, which it is known was not in the original thought of Catherine or the younger Guises, in St. Bartholomew's Massacre. This terrible event has three chief authors: Catherine dei Medici, Henry Guise and Gaspard de Coligni.

CHARLES C. STARBUCK,
Andover, Mass.

*I treat Coligni's evasions as confessions, in view of his public glorying over the murder.

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