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## THE CATHOLIC.

Hamilton, G. D.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19.

To prevent the Editor of the *Church* from writing ignorantly on **INDULGENCES**—an article of the Catholic Faith, with which he seems to be unacquainted—we again subjoin, for his better information, what here follows on that subject.

We may observe to him, however, that there were, if there are not now, similar grants of Indulgences in his own church; such as—“Any person guilty of notorious scandal, in a parish or rectory, was subjected, on public days of worship, to stand an object of shame before the congregation.”—The Penance was nevertheless commuted by the Pastor, upon the delinquent paying a sum of money to the poor; in contributing to the repair and erection of places of worship; or for any other pious undertaking.—And why not? as St. James says, “Charity covers a multitude of sins.”

Your sister Church, the Scotch Kirk, follows the same discipline at the present day.

### INDULGENCES.

Protestants deny the Catholic doctrine of Indulgence, without knowing, or choosing to know, what that doctrine really is; but, as usual, taking for granted the studied misrepresentations made of it by their crafty reformers, who found it their temporal interest to mislead the public; they have been even brought to believe the wicked absurdity that the Catholic Indulgences are but so many licences granted to commit sin. It is truly wonderful that they, who believe nothing on so great an authority as the unanimous and never varying testimony of the whole Catholic Church; so readily believe every thing against her, even the most obvious and palpable falsehoods, on the bare word of any one known to be her adversary. Their credulity on the side of error is as accountably great, as their incredulity, and aversion to know the truth. Under the blindfolding influence of the spirit of error, they exhibit to the eye of the unprejudiced observer, an awful spiritual phenomenon; their dread of being made acquainted with the real doctrines of the Catholic Church; and their bold and unblushing misrepresentation of them; *blatpheming*, as Saint Peter says, the things which they know not,—2 *PET.* ii. 12.—and “of which they are wilfully ignorant; *ib.* ch. iii. verse 5.

An indulgence then, in the Catholic sense, is only the commutation of a greater, more difficult, or longer lasting penance, enjoined for past transgressions, into a less, more practicable, or shorter one; as the spiritual director from his knowledge of the disposition, situation and circumstances of the penitent, sees fittest to prescribe.

In the rigid discipline of the primitive

Church, long lasting, severe humiliating penances were prescribed; public, always for public and scandalous offences; private for private ones. These penances, public or private, were often prudently shortened, or changed into easier performances; sometimes wholly remitted; as in the case of the incestuous Corinthian, on account of his extreme sorrow and edifying repentance; 1 *COR.* v.—2 *COR.* ii. 5.—Now every such diminution, commutation or remission of the temporal punishment for past sin, is an indulgence; a total remission is what is called a plenary indulgence.

But all such penances, enjoined by the proper authority, are binding and obligatory; otherwise the Saviour's declaration to his pastors, “whose sins you shall retain, they are retained; *JOHN.* xx. 23,—was vain; and that, in particular made to his chief pastor,—“to thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; *MAT.* xvi. 19. If then what is thus *bound*, is not *loosed* in this life, either by the exact fulfilment of the penance enjoined; or by the indulgence granted by the binding authority; a punishment proportioned to the penance enjoined here remains to be endured here after.

But with “the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” is granted to the chief pastor the power “to open” as well as “to shut; to loose as well as “to bind”; to forgive us as well as “to retain sin.” It is then of this discretionary power, granted by Jesus Christ to his pastors, that the Church avails herself, under the constant guidance promised her of the Holy Ghost, for the spiritual advantage and final safety of her children. She relaxes therefore, though reluctantly, the primitive holy rigour of her penances; which in the present lukewarm state of the world, would frighten from her communion too large a portion of mankind; who, to avoid “the temporal punishment” here, would thus incur “the eternal” hereafter. She uses thus, like a tender mother, the saving power granted her by her divine spouse, of screening her dear children at any rate from “the wrath to come;” *THESS.* i. 10.—“Pulling them, as it were, out of the fire; having mercy on others in fear; hating also the spotted garment, which is carnal;” *JUDE,* 23; and substituting, instead of her former rigorous penances, which lasted often for years, and corresponded with the immense fervour and zeal of her earliest offspring; more lenient and practicable duties of obedience; for as it was by “disobedience” and “sinful self-indulgence,” that we fell from God; so it is by “obedience” and “self-denial” that we can ever hope to rise to him again; and hence we are assured in Scripture that “obedience is better than sacrifice;” 1 *KINGS.* xv. 22.

Relying therefore on the saving virtue of obedience, she spares the weakness of the weak; and inflicts her wholesome severities only on the strong; whom she thereby transmits into eternity, and delivers up to divine justice, with less to endure, and shorter accounts to render, than those who shrink here from her mild

correcting rod. Such she is forced to leave exposed to the full measure of their punishment hereafter; a punishment far exceeding all that we can imagine endurable in this present life. For “it is a dreadful thing,” says St. Paul, “to fall into the hands of the living God;” *HEB.* x. 31.—Whereas, as the same Apostle tells us, “if we judge and condemn ourselves now, we shall not be judged and condemned hereafter;” 1 *COR.* xi. 31. Such is the Catholic doctrine of Indulgence. It is besides an article of the Catholic faith, that in order to receive the benefit of an Indulgence, one must be “in the state of grace;” for all “in the state of mortal sin,” are enemies of God; and God owes nothing to his enemies, but punishment. All such must then avail themselves of the means afforded them in the Church of Christ, of effecting with their offended God a thorough reconciliation. This, as every Catholic knows, can never be accomplished but by a sincere repentance; which supposes a real sorrow for our sins; a resolution never to commit them more; a renunciation of our evil habits; a reparation of all injuries done to our neighbour; and a humble, true and full confession of our guilt to our spiritual director; by whose counsel we are bound to abide. This duty concluded, with a worthy communion, which is usually enjoined or recommended, and the exact fulfilment of what other goods works are prescribed, as the conditions of obtaining an indulgence, will secure to us all the advantages of one; and therefore confession and communion commonly make part of the conditions on which such a spiritual favour is granted. Is there ought in all this encouraging to sin, as has been asserted by the lying reformers?

This granting of Indulgence is one of the many ways by which, during the present season of mercy and grace, the Church applies the purifying and sanctifying efficacy of the Saviour's atonement to the souls of her obedient and dutiful children. That this, or any other of her sacred institutions, may be abused, none will deny. Must then the institution itself, when abused, be rejected? Or is the Church to be blamed for the infringement of her precepts?

The indulgence granted for contributing towards the building of St. Peter's Church in Rome, was Luther's first pretended plea for quarrelling with the Pope; and the occasion of his apostacy from the faith. He began by railing against that particular Indulgence; the preaching up of which had been transferred from the monks of his order, the Augustinians, to those of the Institute of St. Dominic. He next attacked the general doctrine of Indulgence; and then continuing to pull down article by article, the whole Catholic faith, proclaimed his work of ruin “a glorious reformation;” his random negatives, his loose and contradictory ravings, a fairer scheme of Christianity, than any hitherto existing, or henceforth imaginable. Yet what rational Christian, but must own that the undertaking, for which this Indulgence was granted, was proper, pious, praiseworthy and meritorious? The building of the temple by

Solomon; and the rebuilding of it by Edras, were undertakings, as the Scripture shows, praised and rewarded by God himself. And is the building of a temple to the same God by the converted nations less deserving of his approbation? Was it not becoming the Christian world to rear such a monument to the glory of the Messiah; who, disowned and rejected by the Jews, was received and worshipped by the Gentiles? To erect on the ruins of idolatry, laid prostrate in her own warring capital, an illustrious trophy to the victorious Prince of peace? To bid his blessed banner be displayed; the cross, his royal standard, be exalted on the remarkable spot, where Peter, his chief Apostle, and deputed champion, had beaten down the proud imperial standard of Satan; the gory ensign of Mars, the slaughtering ADDON; the Destroyer?

### THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND JEW BISHOP OF JERUSALEM; OR

#### The Cat let out of the Bag.

In the first No. of our paper, we had an article entitled “The secret of Puseyism disclosed;” shewing the design of the Anglican Bishops to engraft their national episcopal sect on the Greek schismatical one. It would seem that the king of Prussia, as a party in their plan has advanced Fifteen Hundred Pounds towards the realization of this project. As the religion of his State is a Lutheran Episcopal one, he might be so far induced to join in this scheme from his religious bias to Protestant Episcopacy; though not improbably, as many conjecture, more from State policy than religious conviction.—Be that as it may, our Parliament Clergy are exulting at the seeming chance of thus widening the narrow borders of their insulated Zion—of “enlarging the place of her tent—of stretching out the skins of her tabernacle—of lengthening her cords and strengthening her stakes, so that she may pass on to the right hand and to the left.”—*Is.* lvi. Well, as the saying is, “better late than never”—if it be not already too late—for this prophecy concerning the only church of Christ, has been visibly verified many hundred years before ever there was such a thing known in the world as the exclusively national Church of England, differing from all others in its doctrines and discipline, and acknowledging no other head on earth but the man, woman, or child, who happens to be born and acknowledged the British sovereign. But now its members begin to loathe the name of PROTESTANTS, which they took to themselves in common with all dissentient sectaries, and in opposition to that of Catholic, which at present they would fain usurp. Yet, ere this be done, they must show the world in what sense they are truly Catholic; that is, as every linguist knows, UNIVERSAL. Is their church the sole universal one, either as to time or place, and its head, our gracious queen, the only visible head of the universal church? True, but once united with the Episcopal Lutherans and Greek schismatics; when, contrary to national compact,