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"WISDOM IS THE PRINCIPAL THING; THEREFORE GET WISDOM."

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## Review.

THE RISE, PROGRESS, AND DECLINE OF THE REFORMATION IN POLAND.

(From the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine.)

*Historical Sketch of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Reformation in Poland, and of the influence which the scriptural Doctrines have exercised on that Country in literary, moral, and political respects.* By Count Valerian Krasinski. In Two Volumes. London: Murray, Hatchard & Son; Nesbitt & Co; Shaw; Hamilton and Adam; and Wilczewski and Co. 1840.

We take shame to ourselves for not having called attention sooner to these important volumes, which it is not bespeaking too much favour for them to say, ought to occupy a distinguished place in every complete Protestant library. This is no off-hand encomium, but the result of a careful estimate of the pretensions of the work to high consideration, on account of both its literary and theological merits.

Divine Providence always so arranges the circumstances attendant on the discussions of evangelical truth, as to demonstrate that its victories are achieved by more than human power, even though it may press the most gifted men into its service, and stimulate them to a course of arduous exertion. The present crisis is thus characterized. Death has of late years deprived the church of some of "the lights of Christendom," and the world of many a Protestant scholar, just when their acquired influence over the public mind would have proved a strong barrier to the reflux of Roman Catholic and kindred errors. Popery and Puseyism found us, therefore, comparatively unprepared for the struggle. The surviving champions of the reformed faith had, also, too generally relaxed those severer studies, which are essential to the maintenance of its great truths in all their integrity, and had thus let down the standard of public information on the great question at issue between the Protestant and Romish churches. It was while under the terror of a fatal inactivity, resulting from an overweening confidence in the strength of their cause, that Protestants were aroused from their dream of fancied security by the appearance, first, of such writers as Langard and Cobbett, and, subsequently, of Froude, Pusey, and others. The foes of scriptural Christianity had thus the mighty advantage of attacking first, and of choosing also the most advantageous, because undefended, points of attack. There is one very striking exception to this general remark. We allude to the historical writings of Dr. McCrie; who, foreseeing with almost prophetic precience evil days at hand, threw up, single-handed, a noble breast-work of defence around the citadel of Protestantism.

The foes of the pure faith of Protestantism adopt the controversial tactics of arguing from data furnished from a remote antiquity. The more perfect the scholarship brought to bear on the subject, the more vainly confident are they of victory, and the more dexterous do they become in parrying off the death-thrust of "the sword of the Spirit." An ever-watchful Providence, however, can raise up, and is actually thrusting into the field, prodigies of sanctified learning, to meet the wants of the crisis. The appeal to a remote antiquity is no longer a weapon confined to the hands of the assailants of scriptural Christianity. The defenders of "the faith once delivered to the saints" are doing vast execution with it also, and promise to rival Samson's decisive achievements with the jaw-bone of an ass. It is well said, by the learned author of "Ancient Christianity," that "we cannot stand excused from the task of carefully considering the entire mass of extant materials of church history, if we wish to secure any valuable result of sound

truth, ecclesiastical literature promises to become, in future, a more inviting field of labour. The improper uses lately made of it, more especially by the Tractarians, are directing a scripturally-enlightened curiosity to the subject. Into the auxiliary services of a defensive warfare, the general truths of the Reformation are already pressing a deeply-informed literature. And we may hope to realize, as the ultimate result of modern literary and theological effort in that field of research, the weeding out of innumerable fallacies, that have long imposed on the credulous and unsuspecting, and that have had their origin in prejudice, partisanship, defective religious sentiments, superstition, fanaticism, and the just atrait trailing with sacred things. Two periods of the church pre-eminently invite a most minute investigation,—that of the rise of Popery, and that of the origin of the Reformation. It is with the latter only that we have now to do, in our analysis of the able work of Count Krasinski.

Systematised histories of the Reformation, like most of our methodical church histories, are much too general to furnish those precise lessons of practical wisdom, of which the age stands so much in need. Hence the superlative value of such works as the one under review, and as those of the late Dr. McCrie. In truth Count Krasinski's work, as the first of a series of projected historical sketches, is a masterly illustration of the progress of the reformed opinions in the north of Europe, analogous to that compiled by the graphic pen of Dr. McCrie in the south. Perhaps no stronger proof can be given of the value of Count Krasinski's incipient labours, than the evidence we have already had of their effect in erasing the Romanists. This appeared, soon after the publication of the work, by a violent attack upon it in an Edinburgh Romanist Journal, the "Phoenix." There can be no doubt that the circumstance, which makes the Reviewer so bitter against the History of the Reformation in Poland is this, that the workings of the Jesuits in that country, as exposed by Count Krasinski, bear such a strong resemblance to their incipient machinations in the British empire, that one might say, with the Roman poet, "*Mucato nomine de te fabula narratur!*" But though a formal reply to the attack of the Phoenix would obviously be both out of date and out of place here, still a slight notice of its *curieuse calamo*, will not be without its use in showing the *animus* of modern Popery. There is no other solution of the extreme offence given by the Count to this respectable Reviewer,—considering the spirit of moderation which pervades the entire history,—than the incontrovertible evidence it affords of the mischief done in Poland by the Jesuits; all which the Phoenix, instead of refuting, passes over in silence, but tries to insinuate suspicions against the intentions and patriotism of the author.

The Count's principal charges against the Jesuits are particularly developed in volume II, (from page 177 to page 205) and they are for the most part founded on the evidence of Roman Catholic authorities. We may cite, by way of example, the account given us of the system and tendency of the education received in the schools and colleges of the Jesuits. The following extract is given from the work of Broscius, Brozek, a zealous Romanist, and the most learned man of his time in Poland, in a work published in Polish, about 1630, under the title, "Dialogue between a Landowner and a Parish Priest." The anger of the Jesuits, we are told, was wreaked upon the poor printer, the author himself being beyond their reach; and, accordingly, the former was publicly flogged, and afterwards banished.

"The Jesuits, says Broscius, teach children the grammar of Alvar, which is very difficult to understand and learn, and

many reasons. 1. That, by keeping the child a long time in the school, they may receive as long as possible the above-mentioned presence. He had proved in another part of his work, that the Jesuits received in gifts from the parents of the children, whom they pretend to educate gratis, much more than they would have done, had there been a regular payment. 2. That by keeping children for a long time in the school, they may become well acquainted with their minds. 3. That they may train the boy according to their own plans, and for their own purposes. 4. That in case the friends of the boy wish to take him from them, they may have a pretence to keep him saying, 'Give him time, at least, to learn grammar, which is the foundation of every other knowledge.' 5. They want to keep boys at the school in the age of childhood, that they may engage for their Order those who show much talent, or exhibit large inheritances. But, when an individual possesses no talents, nor has expectations, they will not retain him. And what can he do? Knowing nothing, and being unfit for any useful occupation, he must request the Fathers to take care of him, who will provide him with an inferior office in the household of some benefactor of theirs, that they may make use of him afterwards as a tool for their views and purposes."

The Reviewer accuses Count Krasinski of alleging, without any proofs, that the anti-Romists had suffered great persecutions in Poland, and denies the charge on the ground, that the laws of Poland did not permit such a persecution. But this persecution was carried on in spite of those laws, which the Jesuits knew how to evade; and to some extent they now succeed in evading analogous laws in this country. Perhaps the most perfect adept in this art now alive is the great Agitator himself! As for instance of Romanist persecution, the entire work of Count Krasinski, proves, that it was only sheer impossibility which restrained the Roman Catholic Clergy from persecuting the antagonists of their Church, and that they never omitted a favourable opportunity for doing so. Let us only remember the judicial murder of a poor girl, and of several Jews, committed by the Roman Catholic Synod of Lowicz, in 1553. This atrocious act was not perpetrated by the fanaticism of an individual zealot, but by a regularly convoked ecclesiastical Synod, at the instigation of a Papal Nuncio, celebrated for his learning, and well known as an able champion of his church. The Roman Catholic historians, too, instead of condemning such an act, boast not to exult in it, and describe it as a fortunate event for their Church. But we will give this admonitory case in the Count's own graphic language.—

"Having failed to assert its jurisdiction in a case of heresy, the Synod tried it with a lamentable success in that of sacrilege. In order to have a better chance of attaining their object, the Clergy choose now their victim amongst the inferior class of society. Dorothy Lazerka, a poor girl, was accused of having obtained from the Dominicans of Sochaczew a host, feigning to receive communion. It was said, that she wrapped that host in her clothe, and sold it afterwards to the Jews of a neighbouring village for three dollars and a gown embroidered with silk. This host was said to have been carried by the Jews to the synagogue, where, being pierced with needles, it emitted a quantity of blood, which was collected into a flask, and preserved for some religious rites. Notwithstanding the absurdity of this accusation, the Legate seized that occurrence, which, according to Roman Catholic authors, most opportunely happened,\* in order to prove by a miracle

\* "Commodo accidit," says Sencowicki, in his *Epistole Synodorum*. "Commodissime illud eo tempore in Polonia accidit." *Repetitione ad annum 1553.* The

the reality of the transubstantiation, and that the communion of two kinds was quite unnecessary, as the host contained the blood as well as the body of Christ. The Jews tried in vain to prove the absurdity of the charge, arguing, that as their religion permitted them not to believe the mystery of the transubstantiation, they could never be supposed to try a similar experiment on the host, which they considered as a mere man. The Synod, influenced by Lippoman, condemned them, as well as the unfortunate woman, to be burnt alive. This iniquitous sentence could not, however, be put into execution without the *exequatur* of the King, which could not be expected to be obtained from the enlightened Sigismund Augustus. The Bishop of Chelm, Prezerembski, who was at the same time Vice-Chancellor of Poland, made a report to the King of the above-mentioned case, which he described in expressions of anxious horror, and entreated the Monarch not to allow that such a crime, committed against the divine Majesty, should go unpunished. Myszkowski, a grand dignitary of the crown, who was a Protestant, became so indignant at this report, that he could not restrain his anger, and was only prevented by the presence of the King from using violence against the Prelate, the impety and absurdity of whose accusation he exposed in strong language. The Monarch declared that he would not believe such absurdities, and sent an order to the Starost of Sochaczew to release the accused party, but the Vice-Chancellor forged the *exequatur*, by attaching the royal seal without the knowledge of the Monarch, and sent an order that the sentence of this Synod should be immediately carried into execution. The King was informed of the forgery, and he immediately despatched a messenger to prevent its effects. It was, however, too late, and the act, to stigmatize which we have no adequate expression, was perpetrated before the arrival of the royal message. This atrocity filled all Poland with horror, and the hatred which the Legate had already inspired, became still more increased. It also considerably strengthened the anti-Romanist feeling amongst the nation, by showing what the country had to expect, if the Roman Catholic party were to crush its antagonists. Lippoman, having now become the object of a general hatred, left the country, followed by the national execration." (Vol. I. p. 304.)

Popery may, indeed, assume the name of "Phoenix," in the hope of a resuscitated existence in Europe; but, surely, the oft-kindled flames of a persecuting spirit like this,—a spirit more self-annihilating than destructive of its foes,—its reputation will vainly struggle to out-soar. We cannot stop to enumerate the various churches and colleges also, which were destroyed in Poland by the vilest mobs excited by the Clergy, who insured by their influence a perfect impunity to those excesses. The judicial massacres at Thorn, and many similar enormities, might be cited in proof of the blood-thirsty spirit of Rome in that age and country, the events of which are made to pass before us, in all their horrid reality, by the dauntless historian of the Reformation in Poland.

The Reviewer descants, indeed, on the persecutions of Henry the Eighth and of Elizabeth, but conveniently forgets those of Mary, bloody Mary! He maintains, moreover, that the Polish Protestants did not behave like the Roman Catholics of Ireland, who proved their faith *non occidendo sed moriendo*. Has he forgotten the butcheries of the Protestants committed by the Irish Roman Catholics, particularly in 1640! Moreover, when did the Polish Protestants take arms against their country? What was their behaviour at the closing scene of Poland, the massacre of Prague, in 1794! (Vide vol. II. p. 367.) Was there a single traitor amongst the