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## THE PROTESTANT FAITH.

(From the *Pittsburgh Catholic*.)

It is a common error amongst Catholics who have no more intimate acquaintance with Protestantism and Protestants than that which they acquire from reading their books and hearing them talk, to suppose that they are to a certain extent sincere in their profession of a positive belief in the truth and efficacy of certain religious systems which they advocate, and that their opposition to the Catholic Church arises from a regard to these systems and a conviction that she is the great antagonist from whose opposition their destruction is most to be feared. Protestants talk of the Protestant Faith, and Catholics occasionally speak and act as if there were such a thing as a Protestant Faith opposed to that of the Catholic Church in the same way as are the heresies of the East, or the superstition of Mahomet. There is no greater mistake than this.

Protestants have no regard for truth in the matter of religion, and it is a matter of perfect indifference to any individual amongst them that he has nothing approaching to a moral certainty to warrant him in becoming the advocate of certain doctrines which he chooses to profess. Were Protestants to assert that a true belief is necessary, or even important, they would, in so doing, condemn the Reformers and Reformation, for the system of earlier Protestants are universally exploded, and, at the present day, there is hardly to be found a single individual who would have the hardihood to defend Christianity as the system propounded by Luther, or to vindicate doctrines which he could not have rejected three centuries back without incurring the anathema of Calvin.

It is true that Protestants talk of faith, but they attach little meaning to the word; or, if they do, it is a meaning entirely opposed to that which a Catholic would understand it to convey. Faith, with a Protestant, is a belief, not that such and such doctrines are revealed by God, and therefore true, but that he himself will be saved. To be justified by faith, is to be justified by believing that you are justified; to believe in Christ, is to believe that He will save you unconditionally, whether you receive His revelation or reject it, whether you understand and obey His precepts or are ignorant of and break them. This is what Luther and Calvin meant by faith; it is what their disciples mean, when they mean anything; and of all meaningless expressions, there is none more absolutely devoid of sense than that which we so often hear—"The Protestant Faith."

Almost the only opinion in which all Protestants agree, is that which lies at the bottom of Protestantism itself, that there is and can be no such thing as faith, in the sense in which the Catholic uses the word. When a Protestant once realizes that, of the many opinions afloat in the world on the subject of religion, all are not equally true, and that, however difficult it may be to arrive at the truth, it is a duty to do so, and a sin to miss it, he has begun to turn from Protestantism and has entered upon a path which will lead him, if he follows it, to the Catholic Church.

The true Protestant regards the most important questions in religion as mere verbal ones; he holds the discussions and decisions and definitions by which the truth has been defended, as worse than useless; he looks upon the man who becomes a martyr for a religious opinion as a fool. He holds, or at least, he constantly makes statements and admissions which imply, that there is no truth or falsehood in received dogmas of theology; that they are modes, neither good nor bad in themselves, in which the intellect reasons upon the truths of revelation; that it is no fault to hold, but a great fault to insist upon them. Formularies, with him, are only modes of expressing everlasting truths, which might as well be expressed in another way; creeds, rites, persons, are nothing in religion; and the inward spirit *faith*, is all in all. Not that any sect or any individual should concede his opinions and methods of expressing them, but that they should consider their direct contradictories equally pleasing to the great author of Christianity.

It is true that Protestants connected with the older orthodox sects will not readily admit this statement to be correct. It is true that they do not avow these sentiments, and holding it more respectable to be orthodox, not unfrequently affect to be superior to those of their brethren who avowedly reject some doctrines of the Catholic Church, which they themselves profess to retain; nevertheless, these sentiments are really those of the vast majority of Protestants, and the evidence of the fact is to be found in the standard publications of the larger sects.

If any doctrine of Christianity is really essential, one would say it is that which affects the nature of the author of the religion itself. Whether He be indeed true God or an exalted creature, or a mere man, these, one would think, are questions of very essential importance, so much so, that those who differ upon them, can hardly, with any consistency, concede to each other

the title of Christian. Nevertheless, it is a fact that Protestantism claims as her heroes men who have doubted, and men who have denied, the divinity of Christ. Milton, Newton, Clarke and Watts, are the boasts of Protestants, and are claimed as brethren in the faith by men who profess to regard and worship as God Almighty, the Being whom these men regarded as a mere creature. Unitarians themselves, who refuse to recognise in our Saviour a higher character than that of a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary, are undoubted Protestants, and, when they attain distinction, are held up as lights and examples for the Christian world.

Protestantism began with vehement professions of love of truth. Its first teachers affected peculiar jealousy for Jesus Christ, and condemned the worship of the Blessed Virgin and Saints, on the ground that such worship interfered with the adoration due to God alone; it has ended with denying that the doctrine of the divinity of the Saviour, is an essential truth of religion, or, rather, with denying that religion contains any essential truth. Those who deny the divinity of our Lord, and the doctrine of eternal punishment in Hell; who reject all mysteries in religion, and laugh to scorn the theological systems of Luther and Calvin, constitute the great majority of those who are classed under the common designation of Protestants. So rapid has been the progress of Protestantism to unbelief, that men who, fifty years ago would have been branded as Infidels, as Deists, as rejecters of every part and parcel of the Christian faith, are held up now as models of Christian virtue. In what essential particular did the religious system of John Quincy Adams differ from that of David Hume? yet the latter was looked upon as infamous by the parsons of his age, whilst the former, because he admired the Bible, (though he denied its inspiration,) read it every day as he might read Seneca, Plutarch, and recommended it to the attention of his son in a series of letters published since his death, has been commended by the so-called Orthodox Christian journals of the day, as a beautiful exemplar of the practical graces of Christianity.

To be a good Protestant it is not necessary to be a Christian, even in the lowest sense of that much abused term. It is as absurd to call the Socinian a Christian as it is to deny that he is a Protestant. He receives the Bible and exercises his ingenuity in endeavoring to make its teachings square with those of the system which it is his fancied interest to embrace, just as the Methodist or Presbyterian endeavors to exhort from its pages some support for the confession of faith, the Hymn-book, or the discipline.

The distinctive principle of Protestantism is the right and duty of private judgment in matters of religion, the assertion of which necessarily involves the reception of the proposition that there is no such thing as truth in religious matters; that there is no positive revelation, that faith is impossible, and unbelief no sin; that each man's individual opinion as to the truth of a doctrine is the highest evidence he can have for believing it. This is Protestantism, and in the assertion of these principles all Protestants agree. They stigmatise as bigotry, the earnest advocacy of sacred truths, teach that systems are indifferent, and that the sincere professor of any creed will be received at last to eternal joy in the presence of the God of truth. The Bible, and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants, and, if a man receive that, he need receive nothing else; the truths which it contains are matters of indifference; three centuries of wrangling have not sufficed to settle what these are, all is yet open for discussion, nothing is settled, nothing known, and the honest Protestant missionary has but this to say to his convert:—"There is the Bible, take this, believe it to be a revelation from God. No matter about its meaning, we have not settled that at present; we are not agreed who God is, or what He is: what He commands or what He forbids. When we come to a conclusion, I will tell you; meanwhile—

‘Certant grammatici et adhuc sub iudice lis est.’”

## PUSEYISM IN AMERICA.

(From the same.)

The Episcopal Sect differs from all the other heretical bodies with which we are acquainted in this important particular, that whereas other societies exact a uniform profession of some specific heresy as a condition of church membership, this sect freely allows her children to adopt and profess any heresy which it may please their fancy to select, and has embodied in her book of Common Prayer two contradictory systems of theology, to one of which the majority of her clergy are bound to subscribe their assent before receiving ordination, whilst they are obliged to teach the other with their lips whenever they read prayers or administer the sacraments to the members of their flocks.

The articles and liturgy of the Episcopal Church contradict each other. The man who seeks admittance to her ministry is obliged to sign the one before his ordination, and read the other on every occasion in which he officiates in public. The consequence of this singular arrangement is a very general indifference to the so-called "teachings of the Prayer Book." The Calvinist, indeed, affects to be shocked at the dishonesty of his brother the Arminian, who scoffs at articles to which he has solemnly subscribed his assent; and the High Churchman is indignant when he reflects upon the impiety of the Evangelical minister, who, whilst strenuously denying the regenerating effect of the sacrament of baptism, allows himself to become a party to what he must regard as a solemn farce, by assuring the assembled congregation on every occasion of a baptism in public, that the infant whom he has sprinkled is really regenerate and born again of water and the Holy Ghost; but neither party is accustomed to trouble himself much about his own inconsistencies, and both agree in receiving such parts of the prayer book as suit their private views, and rejecting or explaining away the portions in which those views are contradicted and denied.

Two opposing systems being contained within the covers of the "Book of Common Prayer," it is perfectly evident that it is impossible to follow, as it is to reconcile the contradictory teachings of that precious compilation. Some of the parsons choose the liturgy, and some the articles, whilst the majority regard both with equal contempt, sign the one and read the other under protest that they bind themselves to no specific belief by these acts, and adopt any creed which the humor of the moment may suggest, or the force of circumstances render expedient. We ourselves remember to have heard, in one city and on one Sunday, from different preachers of this denomination, the rankest Calvinism in the morning, old-fashioned high church theology in the afternoon, and what an honest Protestant would call the most unmitigated Popery towards the close of the day.

To say that a man is a Methodist or a Presbyterian is to say something to the point; but to speak of an individual as an Episcopalian is to give no information whatever on the subject of his religious belief. One Episcopalian parson denies apostolical succession, another affirms it; one denies Lutheran justification, another maintains it; one denies the inspiration of Scripture, a second holds Calvin as a Saint, a third considers the doctrine of sacramental grace a superstition, a fifth sides with Nestorius, and a sixth is a Sabellian. Each of these men has an argument to prove that he is perfectly justified in maintaining his position in his sect, and no one can be fairly considered as more inconsistent than the rest.

As towards the close of the last century, a large and influential party in the Church of England, headed by one of the most learned and famous Bishops of his time, maintained that a Socinian might consistently become a minister of the Episcopal church, in spite of the Articles, the Liturgy, and the Athanasian Creed itself, so, of late years, a large body of the most learned clergy of that sect have maintained, that the ministry may be exercised without scruple by those who make no secret of receiving all the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. This school has had few disciples amongst Episcopalian here, but it has had some, amongst the most prominent of whom may be reckoned Dr. Ives, the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of North Carolina. This prelate, long the leader of the small faction of ultra-Puseyites in this country, has, if report says true, far surpassed the crazy dreamer from whom the party takes its name, in manifestations of hatred for Protestantism and protestations of attachment to those doctrines and devotional practices which until later days have been considered as the exclusive property of the Catholic Church. A band of young men were organized by him, bound to celibacy and Bishop Ives. Those young parsons or students whose Puseyite tendencies had rendered them suspected in other parts of the country, were sure to find a refuge in the diocese of North Carolina. The consecrated bread was reserved for adoration in the Bishop's chapel, after the manner of the Blessed Sacrament in the Catholic Church; a belief in the doctrine of transubstantiation as contained in the Roman catechism, and of the doctrine of justification as taught in the Symbolism of Mehlher, was required from those who sought ordination at his hands; and devotion to the Blessed Virgin and the Saints was inculcated by precept and example, and by the circulation of prayer books containing the Hail Mary and other prayers addressed to the Mother of God.

The open inculcation of such doctrines and practices, was not likely to meet with favor among the laity and the older portions of the clergy under the Bishop's charge. The prelate was, in a manner, summoned for trial before his convention, a body

consisting of a select number of the parsons and the laity from every parish. An investigating Committee, after due examination, prepared a report and was about to submit it to the Convention, when the Bishop, having counted the cost, and deciding that it was not his vocation to become a martyr, spoiled the fun by pleading guilty to the whole charge, and with tears in his eyes begged from his dear offended brethren of the clergy and laity, pardon and pudding for the rest of his life; in consideration for which he professes himself willing to adopt, and advocate such religious views as it shall appear to the Convention most convenient for him to receive.

This scene, which is of recent occurrence, we find reported in full in some of our exchanges. It was affecting to the last degree. The venerable prelate declared that his theological vagaries, extending, be it remembered, through the space of ten years or so, are to be attributed to the diseased state of his health, assured them that he would never do so any more, and sank down overcome with emotion. The clergy and laity were dissolved in tears.

Thus has fallen one who once, to all appearance, was not far from the kingdom of God; and for what a mess of pottage he has sold his birth-right!

He has given up the next world, and we think few will deny that the poor, suspected, despised, and dependant old man cannot boast that he has gained much in this. It is a dangerous thing to play at religion and to trifle with the grace of God.

## THE WHIG BENEFACTION TO THE CHURCH.

(From the *Tablet*.)

The Penal Bill is now fairly on its way to become that sacred and inviolable thing—the law of the land. It becomes, therefore, our duty to see to what account we are to turn it, for assuredly Whigs and Liberals who patronise us intend it for some special benefit to us and our posterity. In the first place, it is clearly a manifestation of their loving tenderness towards us—the highest proof they could give of their unceasing desire to be of service to their humble and lowly-minded servants. We have served them so faithfully as to have been unfaithful to God in many things, and, as punishment must inevitably result from that infidelity, it is only just that the Whigs who have corrupted us should pour down upon us the singular benedictions of their love. In the next place, they have done what they could to reveal to us their own nature and characteristics, in order to conciliate our affections, because it is not possible for us to love those of whom we know nothing. We now have an opportunity of learning the real dispositions of a Whig, and of duly appreciating them, so that our gratitude shall bear some adequate proportion to the goodness of his character, and the greatness of the favors which he has so unexpectedly and yet so lavishly heaped upon us.

Human nature is, after all, corrupt, and is essentially ungrateful. It is much to be feared that, after all, we shall not profit by this opportune revelation of Whig tenderness. Men are slow to believe what they do not like, more especially when that belief must be followed by corresponding action. The Lutheran heresy is natural to man, and Faith without works, if not true doctrine, is certainly an easy one, and gives extremely little trouble to its professors. Those Catholics who will not learn wisdom from Whig teaching and tyranny must be consigned to other instructors, from whom, when too late, they will easily learn what is now so painful to understand.

There are men upon whom instruction is wasted, whose sterile intellects are incapable of wholesome tillage. Upon these, of course, public events will make no impression. But there are others who, not requiring such a lesson as we have had, will be able to turn it to profitable account. They cannot be put to silence again by oppressive civilities, nor denounced as alarmists when they call attention to the tricks of government officials. These were right in denouncing the Whigs; and the safe and prudent, who saw no danger in the aspect of Government, were wrong while they persuaded themselves that the day of State dishonesty was gone. On the whole, this is a gain; many, of course, will still cling to the Whigs, but they will lose the advantage of their Catholicism, and will be branded as disloyal to the Church. They will have, for a time at least, less power to do evil, and the Government who buys them will do so with its eyes open, and will deal with them according to their value. They will be without credit among their fellow-Catholics, and the heretics whom they serve will express, without much hesitation, the profound contempt which they feel for their misguided tools.

But there is another aspect of this question which is really most refreshing. At this time, when the Catholic Church was gaining ground in England, and persons of rank and learning submitting to her guidance, some external check like this was needed.