

THE WESLEYAN.

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THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

POWER, PRESENCE AND PRESENCE.—To the unhallowed alliance of secular ambition and ecclesiastical degeneracy, may without difficulty be traced the baleful operation of "the mystery of iniquity" in its most successful efforts to desolate the heritage of God. Let not this remark be misunderstood. We covet neither rank nor reputation among the croakers against the principle of an ecclesiastical establishment. We think it may be adopted in perfect harmony with the genius and spirit of the Gospel, and legitimately carried out so as amply to remunerate by its salutary effects, the nation that thus pays its public homage at the shrine of Revelation. At the same time, we are not blind to its susceptibility of abuse. When the arm of secular power, instead of sustaining and shielding the religion of the Bible, lends itself to strengthen the pillars and decorate the edifice of superposition and idolatry, its energies, unquestionably, are fearfully prostituted; and we are greatly mistaken if the King of Prussia is not at this moment exhibiting to the eyes of the world, an abuse of imperial power of precisely this character.

We had hoped better things of him. Till the affair of Cologne undeceived us, it was, we confess, our full and unsuspecting impression, that, if Protestant Christianity could boast a sceptred friend on the Continent of Europe,—one whose attachment was based on principle, and animated with some personal knowledge of the power of religion, that individual was King Frederick William, Unutterably painful to our minds, therefore, is the contemplation of the recent events at Cologne, by which the charm of that impression has been completely dissipated.

Directing a closer attention to the position and policy of this eminently influential prince, we find that the credit of whatever of grandeur—falsely so named—attaches to the project of uniting the Romish and the Reformed Churches, is due to the late King of Prussia; and that, in point of fact, the Son is merely prosecuting the favourite design, and aiming to realize the first wish of the Father. It may not be generally known that the late king, in the year 1817, with a view to effect a union between the Lutheran Churches of his empire and the Reformed Calvinistic Church, of which he was himself a member, desired all the clergy of both bodies to furnish individually their views of the best plan for the accomplishment of that object. Years elapsed without any satisfactory result. No approximation towards the consummation so strongly desired, or rather, so resolutely determined upon by the royal mind, was perceptible. Another expedient, likely to be more efficient, was therefore adopted in 1822. The king constituted the Rev. Mr. Bunson and seven other clergymen, bishops; who, in return, made him their *Ober-bischof*, or chief bishop. The next step was the preparation of a Liturgy, which was drawn up so as to conciliate as much as possible the acquiescence of both Lutherans and Calvinists. The state of the Prussian Clergy generally was highly favourable to the success of the measure. The spirit of the Reformation had well nigh evaporated; and its doctrines, too, were corrupted and neutralized by the admixture of neology,—in multitudinous cases, in fact, altogether superseded by ill-disguised infidelity itself. With all such clerical gentleness, scruples of conscience, if any conscience they had

on the subject, were not to be indulged at the expense of the royal favour, and temporal comfort and emolument to boot. The dissentients were comparatively few and feeble. And, to compel their submission, they were stripped of their office; and those of them who were subsequently detected exercising its functions had to endure severe penalties,—in some instances, imprisonment for years. Thousands of the private members of the Church sought an asylum in England or on the shores of America. About this time it was that the late King of Prussia (*mirabile dictu!*) received from the Pope a title of official dignity in the Church of Rome,—a fact which speaks volumes as to his ulterior object. In this advanced state of preparation for the development at Cologne, which has recently shocked the minds of all who attach any importance to the Reformation, did the late king leave this comprehensive project of union to his successor on the throne. Faithful to the trust committed to him by his father, but recreant to all his responsibilities and obligations as a Protestant Prince, King Frederick William throws the splendour of his throne around the erection of a Popish Cathedral, and glories in laying "the corner-stone of the union," as he himself designates it,—a union by which, under the seductive pretext of an expansive charity, it is attempted to amalgamate light and darkness, essential truth and destructive error, the pure worship of God and gross idolatry. And, in his own person, this anomalous union is exemplified, for the instruction and imitation of his subjects. He worships in the Protestant Church in the morning, and in the afternoon assists at the celebration of high mass.

Were the bearing of the unprecedented and momentous movement we have been contemplating circumscribed by the boundaries of Prussia, did it wake no sympathy, did it elicit no fraternal response in our father-land,—not to say in the very bosom of the Anglican Church,—it might then be treated as an isolated event, with which we have little or no concern, or even as a fiction of the imagination, which, indeed, it resembles much more than it does the analogy of human events. But if it be true,—as is stated by the *London Times*, and evidently believed by the *Churchmen* of New York, the great organ of the Republican Puseyites,—if it be true that the King of Prussia, taking his own authority in his own dominions, as the centre and basis, and the Germanic feeling of nationality as the immediate circle and atmosphere of his operations, embraces within his design those more remote influences towards which the moral powers of Prussia and Germany may be supposed to gravitate, and seeks to comprehend in that federal unity of creeds which he is bent upon consolidating, THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND on the one hand, and THE CHURCH OF ROME herself on the other;—if it be true that the principles of this antichristian scheme met with distinguished advocates in England, including the late Dr. Arnold, and the Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford,—if, with a view to facilitate the attainment of his favourite object—the coalescence of the Popish and Reformed Churches,—the King of Prussia has entered into negotiations with some of the English Bishops, and contributed to the support of Bishop Alexander at Jerusalem, expressly for the purpose of obtaining Episcopal orders for candidates for the sacred office in the German Church, then does it behoove all who feel an interest in the maintenance of "the truth as it is in

Jesus," and in its transmission in uncorrupted purity and unimpaired completeness, to praterity, to be observant of the tendency of the great public events that are now transpiring, and to beware, lest drinking of the wine of the wrath of the fornication of mystic Babylon, they be partakers of her sins, and receive of her plagues.

That the reader may be satisfied that the concern we have expressed in the previous remarks is no exaggeration of over-sensitive apprehension, we subjoin the closing sentences of the article in the *London Times*, to which we have referred. He will thus be enabled to judge for himself whether we merit more the character of an interested alarmist, or that of a faithful watchman on the walls of Zion:—

"About the same time that the king's views were received thus favourably by the English prelates, they were making similar progress at the Court of Rome. Through the instrumentality of the same able diplomatist who organized the Prussian Evangelical Church, and negotiated the establishment of the Jerusalem bishopric, a settlement of the question in dispute between the king and the Archbishop of Cologne was obtained from the Pope, which conceded the whole question of mixed marriages, superseded the Archbishop from the practical exercise of his functions, and, in fact, gave a complete triumph to the Prussian Crown. The king naturally claims this as a momentous victory to his favourite principle; and the late ceremonial at Cologne has been a celebration of this victory, as the completion of that magnificent structure is intended to be a monument of it. As in London his majesty exemplified that principle by going in state to St. Paul's in the morning, while he privately attended the Lutheran chapel in the afternoon, so at Cologne he went first to the Protestant service, and afterwards (to the lively joy of a crowded Roman Catholic congregation) assisted at high mass in the cathedral. Nor was this conduct dictated by temporal policy, or religious indifference; it sprang from convictions evidently most deep and sincere, and shared at the time, as the circumstances would fairly lead us to infer, by the Pope's representative and the whole Roman Catholic population of Cologne;—convictions which the king expressed in his feeling and eloquent speech, when he said that "this was the work of the brotherly feeling of Germans of all denominations, of all creeds;" when he declared his hope that the path under those gates might never be trodden by "disturbers of the peace of confessions;" and when he uttered his prayer that the great work might prove "a monument of the brotherly feeling between creeds who feel that they are one before their sole, their Divine Head." It is not a little remarkable that the conduct and the language of the king in his intercourse with the Church of England, and the manner in which his advances were received by our bishops, should have been so closely paralleled by the events at Cologne, where the Roman Catholic Church was the religious body concerned.

INTOLERANT BIGOTRY AND CHRISTIAN CHARITY.—A highly illustrative specimen of the former of these qualities,—such as might appropriately enough have been inscribed on the walls, and emblazoned by the nocturnal twinklings, of the *Star-chamber*, but which, for the honour of the Christian body whose interests it is designed—certainly not calculated—to subvert, ought not to have been exposed to the Sun of religious knowledge, in his present elevation,—is furnished by the *Church* of the 25th inst. Here you have it:—

"Churchmen frequently attend Dissenting meeting houses out of curiosity, to see the difference of worship, or to hear some popular Dissenting teacher deliver a Sermon. But there can be no excuse for indulging this dangerous curiosity. If it be wrong to communicate with Dissenters at all, it is wrong to communicate even once. One theft is a violation of God's holy Word, and so is one act of communication, and so is one holding communion, and running after

a strange and forbidden worship, we run into that temptation, from which we pray to be delivered: "offending in one point, we are guilty of all;" we set a bad example to others; and, altogether, we have not the crutch of an excuse to lean upon, whenever we attempt to justify our attendance at any religious assemblage, gathered together in the violation of the unity of Christ's body, the Church, and presided over by "teachers who had no apostolical or episcopal imposition of hands,"—or who, as in the case with Romish priests, have a valid commission, but preach heretical and anti-scriptural doctrines, and administer the Holy Sacrament in an idolatrous and mutilated manner.

"If then it be sinful to be present even once at a schismatical religious assembly, how much more sinful is it to furnish assistance in money or land to those, who rend the body of Christ, and lie under the condemnation of His holy Church? What is this but to enable them to perpetuate their errors, and to widen the separation from generation to generation? We have already affirmed—we affirm again—and we will never, at fitting opportunities, cease to affirm,—that for a Churchman to contribute directly or indirectly, by donations in money, or land, or in any other shape whatsoever to the support of any sect—or in this Province, to the support of any denomination (without a single exception) besides his own—is to set at naught the teachings of the Holy Scripture, the testimony of the Primitive Church and early fathers, the authoritative voice of the Anglican Church, and the recorded declarations of our most illustrious Martyrs Bishops and Divines."

Bravo! To enforce these maxims and monitions of a wisdom so pure, so peaceable,—some one may probably ask,—what arguments are adduced? Arguments! Simple inquirer, if you wait for satisfaction of that kind your initiation is a desperate hope. Arguments are a species of articles in which the Editor of the *Church* finds it neither profitable nor prudent to deal. His object is much better attained in another way. He clothes himself with "a little brief authority;" and dragging into the field *canons*, not indeed taken from any national arsenal—thanks to the spirit and efficiency of the *British Government*—but actually exhumed from among the buried things of by-gone generations, arrays them against the cause of Christian charity. An argument this, at all events, which conclusively proves what he would do were it but in his power. Though we can well afford to smile at the impotence of such opposition to genuine catholicity, we really pity the subject of the infatuation, and would take the liberty to suggest to him, that those who meddle with such rusty and unlawful instruments of destruction have more to apprehend from their explosion than any others from their discharge: To be serious; we are concerned for the honour of the Anglican Church, and anxious to purify its escutcheon from the foul stain of Papal assumption, and undistinguishing exclusiveness which our contemporary seeks to fix upon it. Her uninvited spirit, before the milk of Christian kindness had curdled in her breasts, has yet some honourable—we might without adulation say—illustrious living example in this Province. From one of these, at whose feet the Editor of the *Church* ought to count it a privilege to sit, and learn, he has received lessons on this very topic which from the hour of their inculcation ought to have checked his exterminating zeal, and taught him something of "the meekness of wisdom." The admirable document to which we refer will live among the memorials of its author, a monument at once of his enlightened attachment to the Church of England, and of his truly Christian feelings and benevolence to other religious communities.