

QUOD SEMPER, QUOD UNIQUE, QUOD A OMNIBUS CREDITUM EST.

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### A KNOTTY QUESTION.

The definition commonly received, and given in all the most approved Protestant Theological dictionaries, is substantially the same with that stated more briefly in *Brande's Encyclopedia*.

**PROTESTANTS.**—A general name applied to the various denominations of Christians which have sprung from the adoption of the principles of the Reformation in the 16th century.

In the earlier period of the Reformation, the principal reformed churches were two, those of the followers of Luther and Calvin, the partisans of Swingle having become nearly identified with the latter. Since that time the number of sub-divisions upon every point of doctrine and discipline has been infinite. The general bond of union, however, among all, continues to this day to be the assertion of private judgment, and rejection of any infallible head of the church, or ultimate authority in pope or council.

Brande's compilation is of considerable repute: among Protestants, at least; and upon this point its authority is unquestionable, inasmuch as we learn from the title-page that the "Theology" was under the charge of the "Rev. Charles Merivale, M. A.," a clergyman of high standing as a divine and a scholar, and for whose unblemished Protestantism, notwithstanding his Oxonian M. A., the Articles relative to Catholicism and Catholic matters are triumphant evidence. Apart from all this, however, the definition is undoubtedly the best that can be given. Yet, it does not meet the necessities of the case, though evidently framed with the intention of obviating all objections.

Passing over the damaging irony of the cool observation that since the Reformation "the number of sub-divisions" of the two original churches "upon every point of doctrine and discipline, has been infinite,"—it will occur to every reader that what is called, by the singular perversion of terms, "the bond," merely, the exercise of the right of private judgment, is in point of fact, no bond at all; because, of its very nature, it must divide and dissolve all societies. This is the cardinal error of all those definitions of what is the Protestant religion, into which private judgment enters as the principal defining feature. In its essence, the exercise of private judgment pre-supposes the possibility, nay, the necessity, of change; and, therefore, no definition assigning it as the distinctive mark of the Protestant religion, can be final, whether as to the number of sects included under the general head "Protestant," nor even as to the doctrines of the sects already existing. The Private Judgment that to-day limits the numbers of sects, entitled to the orthodox appellation, of "Protestant," to 100 or 150, as the case may be, can to-morrow enlarge it to 200; and may at the same time, upon a closer examination of the subject, totally alter the doctrines of the original 100 or 150.

Religious Truth is, and must be, one and immutable; Private Judgment is, and must be, individually inconsistent and generally discordant. What a glaring absurdity then to attempt to yoke them; and a fortiori how much more glaringly absurd is it to endeavour to make the latter the standard of the former! Surely the time will come, when the monstrous error will have passed forever from the world, only to be looked back on, with

wonder as one of the marvels of the past; if not with doubts that it ever held sway over the minds of reflecting men.

Thus, then, there can be no such thing as a definition of Protestantism. A system which has for its fundamental principle the Right of Private Judgment, can never have any definite boundaries, and to ask for a definition of it, is to ask for a logical contradiction. The doctrines which the Private Judgment of any man induces him to adopt this week or year, more mature study and deeper learning may, and often does, lead him to greatly change, or wholly abandon, the next. Under the operation of an agent like this, settled and definite doctrine is, of course, quite out of the question; and there being no settled and definite doctrine, a "definition" is equally a thing not to be thought of.

To define Protestantism as consisting in holding "the Bible alone, without a note or comment, as understood by Private Judgment, to be the Rule of Faith,"—is a definition popular among Protestants; if a general use of it be any indication that way. It is, however, nothing but the other definition a little expanded, the ultimate result of both being the same, the Right of Private Judgment. The error of this, being exposed, every definition dependant on it falls to the ground.

But, waiving this consideration, the definition is defective. The Episcopalians—at least as many as know what are the distinctive doctrines of their communion—will object to it, inasmuch as while they do not hold, the Bible alone to be the Rule of Faith, but are willing to defer to the authority of their own church, and still more to the practice of the Catholic church during what they very illogically term her "pure epoch,"—they claim a right to be called Protestants. We do not know any good reason, why this title, if they wish it, should not be yielded to them; and thus the definition proves unsound.—We might show this to be the case with some other Protestant sects; but there is no need to do so; a failure to cover any one of them being as fatal a failure with half-a-dozen.

The truth is that—in this country particularly—nines Protestants in ten do not know exactly what they believe—know nothing clearly, of their position, except that—they are against the Catholics. Their Protestantism is much more a matter of factious opposition, than of passive belief. Like the Hessians in our Revolutionary war, they are ignorant of the principles of their adversaries; have none of their own; know nothing certainly, except that they are "against the other side."

It is useless, therefore, to ask for the definition of a religious party which had no principles to start with, except one, in its nature, destructive of all principle; and which so far from having settled them since, has in the attempt to do so, been split into innumerable fragments; themselves in turn ready to fly into smaller atoms. Mr. Webster is famous for his apprehension of the strong points of his case, but it is casting no reflection on his unquestioned powers to doubt his ability to decide what Luther and Calvin quarrelled about; and where he is excused, we of course, cannot be expected to give an opinion. "Persecutor," therefore, should select some more promising subject for his scrutiny than hunting up a definition of what is necessarily undefined and undefinable.—*N. Y. Freeman's Journal.*

### PROGRESS OF MORMONISM.

One of the most curious—the very most curious signs of the times, is the growth and history of Mormonism; of which most of our readers know very little. This sect, founded originally on the imposture of a supposed revelation, has, notwithstanding that imposture, been continually increasing. The city of Nauvoo, in Illinois, contains from fifteen to twenty thousand inhabitants: Merchants, mechanics and others have gone there for purposes of business. Buildings are continually erecting, among others, the great Temple; which has been some time building, but is not finished yet. They have, moreover, saw-mills, and quarries of stone in operation, at which the materials are preparing. The Organ of the Mormons also affirms, that their sect is everywhere increasing, and that emigrants are still flocking to this country. They say that they have missionaries in nearly every land—that some are in India and some in New Holland.

The Legislature of Illinois have granted a charter to Nauvoo, and the Nauvoo Legion, of the utmost power and liberality. They have availed themselves of those charters to set their enemies at defiance.

One of the most recent occurrences, is the correspondence of Gen. Joe Smith with Mr. Calhoun, and we presume with other public men. Mr. Calhoun says that he looks upon all beliefs, sects, &c., (politically of course) as entitled to equal consideration; but, he must inform Mr. Smith, that he does not think the General Government has any power to compel Missouri to admit the Mormon claims.

Upon the receipt of this, General Joe Smith replies at length, informing Mr. C. that he does not know more than he ought to do, and that he and the world must take care how they oppose the Mormons, for that they are destined to prevail.

We are informed that Gen. Joe Smith & Co. have declared against both Van Buren and Calhoun. Who the Mormons have taken to, we have not learned.—*Cincinnati Chronicle.*

The *Cincinnati Chronicle* is amazed at the progress of Mormonism; yet it is merely a natural development of the glorious Protestant Principle of private judgment. His ignorance of "who they have taken to" is inexplicable. We thought that in the West it was generally believed that the tendencies of the Mormons were strongest towards his Britannic Majesty.—*N. Y. F. Journal.*

The following frightful statement, as to the spiritual ignorance now existing in Liverpool, was lately made at a meeting of the town mission there:—There are 60,000 adults who never enter a place of worship, except at a marriage or a funeral; 12,000 adults cannot read; 14,000 females have not a solitary fragment of the word of God; and 26,000 go to no school whatever.

An inhabitant of Corsu, who recently returned from Spitzbergen, after an absence of 23 years, found his wife in good health, but the widow of three husbands.—*The Ariel.*  
This is a striking fact to show the length of time, without a concurrence of other circumstances, does not warrant the presumption of death. How many deluge themselves in this respect, and rush to second nuptials, which before God are but legalized adultery.—*C. Herald.*