

**THE BIBLE, AND THE BIBLE ONLY,  
THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS.**

[A lecture delivered by the Rev. J. M. Neale, M.A. in the Town Hall, Brighton, and forming one of the "South Church" Union course of lectures.]

Although I have not the slightest intention of preaching a sermon on the present occasion, I shall begin with a text. It is not indeed to be found in Holy Scripture; but, to judge from the number of times one hears it quoted, and the stress that is laid upon it, people seem to value it quite as much as if it were. My text, then, for the present occasion will be this: "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants." This is quoted triumphantly at lectures, on platforms, in sermons, as if it were an unanswerable argument against Tractarians—as if, whatever else they could get over, that must be too much for them. Now I am going to show you, in the first place, that this celebrated text has nothing to do with the subject: and in the second, that if it had over so much to do with it, it is not true.

I say, it has nothing to do with the subject, and I say so for this reason. I can allow no force in it as regards myself, because I am not a Protestant. I can allow no force in it as regards the Church of England, because the Church of England never was, is not now, and I trust in God never will be, Protestant.

Yes: I know that this statement does not please you. And I trust that no one will run away with this one sentence of mine without taking what follows. For perhaps when we come to inquire a little into the meaning of this famous word, Protestant, we shall not disagree so very much. What do you mean when you say that you are Protestants? What do you mean when you talk of the Protestant Faith, and the Protestant Religion?

The word *Protestant*, in its simple and original sense, means, clearly, some thing, or some person that protests. Therefore, in one sense, all forms of Christianity are Protestant. They all protest against vice, immorality, infidelity, and so forth. In that sense, of course, I desire also to be a Protestant.

Again, in another sense, the word Protestant means one that protests against the errors of the Church of Rome: and in that sense I have no objection to call myself one.

But this is not the original meaning of the word. According to that, a Protestant is one who protests against the Diet of Spire, which was summoned by the Emperor CHARLES V., in 1529, and who appeals from that to a General Council. Now, as I very much suspect that few of you could tell me what was done in the Diet of Spire, and as I am sure that fewer would appeal to a future General Council with the intention of submitting unhesitatingly to its decrees, it is plain that you do not call yourselves Protestants in the sense in which those early followers of LUTHER called themselves so. And if another proof were wanting, take this:

In the sixteenth century, those who had separated themselves from the Church of Rome were divided into two great parties: the one called Protestants, that is the followers of LUTHER; the other called Reformers, that is, the followers of CALVIN. And these two would have no more communion with each other than either would with the Pope. And the railing they used against each other was perfectly frightful. LUTHER's gentlest terms for ZWINGLI, the Swiss reformer, are "dog," "beast," "hog," "Anti-christ," "devil." When LUTHER had ended a long and useless conference with CAROLSTADT, the German leader of the reformed doctrines, they bade adieu to each other thus: "I trust," said CAROLSTADT, "that I shall live to see you broken on the wheel." "And I hope," returned LUTHER, "that I shall hear of your breaking your neck before you reach home."

Now, these things prove that, as then Protestants thus railed at Calvinists, while you, on the contrary, speak of the followers of LUTHER and of CALVIN equally as Protestants, you must use the word in a very different sense from that in which the sixteenth century employed it.

Well, you may answer, but so we may. We mean by Protestant, those who protest against Popery. In that sense we say that we are Protestant; and we say that the Church of England is Protestant; and we have a right to call it so.

Not exactly. It is not enough that a word is capable of a good sense to justify you in applying it to others. I have no right to say, I am addressing an assembly of Baptists; and yet Baptists you certainly are, and so am I, for we all hold that Baptism is an ordinance of CHRIST. I have no right to say, I am addressing an assembly of Jesuits; and yet I trust that, in the true and holy sense, Jesuits we all are; that is, that we are endeavoring to be followers of Him, from Whose Blessed Name the word is derived.

Thus, you see, there is a certain conventional sense which in the course of ages attaches itself to a word, and which individuals have no right and no power to detach from it. I will give you a more familiar example. The word *calamity* in its original sense, means a driving storm of wind and rain that lays the corn. But how absurd would it be if I were to tell you that, the other day, as I was walking out, there came on such a *calamity* as to wet me to the skin!

Well, but you will say, that is the very thing. This conventional sense *does* apply the word Protestant to one who protests against the errors of Popery.

Then here we join issue. I say, this conventional sense applies the word Protestant to something very different. And I will prove what I say.

There is a Church, the most venerable for its antiquity in the world—a Church, six hundred years older than our own—a Church, that has kept up a continual succession of Bishops in the same Sees from the time of the Apostles till now; I mean the Eastern, or what people generally call the Greek, Church: a Church which contains about sixty-six million of souls, and which does most strenuously protest against Roman errors and Roman usurpations. I will give you an instance or two. The late Patriarch of Antioch, MERTHOUDIS (of whom I knew something) spent the whole of a long and active life in opposing the Latin missionaries; and his death, I believe, was hastened by his exertions in preserving from them the people committed to his charge. The present Patriarch of Constantinople, ANTHIMUS, is exciting at this moment by schools, by tracts, every nerve against Rome. Only a fortnight ago, I received from his press at Constantinople a book in two octavo volumes, called *Proofs against the Papists*, and a very good one it is. The present Metropolitan of Moscow, PHILARET (of whom I also know something) and the present Metropolitan of Novgorod and St. Petersburg, NICANOR, are both distinguished controversialists against Rome. But what do I talk of individuals? Thirteen years ago, two millions of Roman Catholics, including three Bishops, came over in one day to the Eastern Church: and the late Pope GREGORY XVI., in his allocution to the Cardinals, of November 16, 1839, spoke of this as one of the heaviest blows that had ever befallen Rome. One instance more. In 1848, Pius IX. addressed a general epistle to the Eastern Church, inviting it to return, as he called it, to a submission to Rome. On this, the four Eastern Patriarchs published a circular letter to their flocks. From that letter I will read you an extract or two; because the strength of its language (which I do not for one moment defend), is quite worthy of Exeter Hall, or of your own Brighton Protestant Defence Association. "Of those heresies," they say, "which have spread over a great part of the world for judgments known to the Lord, Arianism was one, and at the present day Popery is another. But like the former, which has altogether vanished, the latter also, though now flourishing, shall not endure to the end, but shall pass and be cast down, and that mighty voice shall be heard from heaven—'Babylon is fallen.' Why, you would think it was DR. CUMMING who spoke.

Again: "The Papal power hath not ceased to deal spitefully with the quiet Church of God, but every where sending forth the so-called missionaries, men that deal in souls, compasseth sea and land to make one proselyte, to deceive one of the orthodox, to destroy the teaching of our Lord, to bastardize the Divine Symbol of our faith. All they that innovate as do the Latins, whether by heresy or schism, have of their own free will put on, according to the Psalmist, cursing like a garment. Whether they be Popes, or Patriarchs, or Clerks, or Laymen, or an Angel from heaven, if they preach any other Gospel than that we have received, let them be anathema."

Thus, you see, that the Eastern Church protests, most energetically too, against Roman errors. Yet would any man in his senses ever call the Eastern Church Protestant? Why, in the Council of Bethlehem, held in 1642, it expressly anathematized Protestantism (though not the English Church).

Well, now, if that is Protestant which protests against the errors of Rome, why, do you not call the Eastern Church, which does so strongly protest against them, by this name *Protestant*?

Why, you reply, because the Greek Church is every bit as bad as Popery.

Ah: now we are coming a little closer to the point. By a Protestant then you mean one who protests—not against the errors of Rome, but—against something held in common by the Roman and by the Eastern Church.

And that something is, I will venture to

say, not held more strongly by either of them than it is by the English Church. You mean by Protestant, a man who protests against the Sacramental system of the Church—against Baptismal Regeneration—against the Divine gift of the HOLY GHOST in Confirmation—against the Real Presence—against the Apostolic Succession—against the Power of Absolution. Therefore it was that I said that the Church of England never was, is not, and by God's grace never will be, Protestant: because she holds, as most necessary truths, every one of these blessed doctrines.

Of course it is quite out of the question that I should now begin to prove all this to you. That has been done again and again, probably will be done again and again. I dare say, before we put an end to these lectures, some of us shall have occasion to enter on the subject. Now I will only observe, that a Church which thanks God for the regeneration of every person whom she baptizes, which teaches every child to say that he has been made a member of CHRIST, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, which declares that her Bishops, after the example of the Apostles, lay their hands on those whom they confirm, that the HOLY GHOST may be bestowed upon them, which gives absolution in as strong, if not stronger terms than does any other Church under the sun, which bids her Priests, when ordained, receive the HOLY GHOST, and addresses them in those most solemn words, "Whose sins thou dost remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained; I say that a Church which holds and does all this, holds and does much which is absolutely repudiated by Protestants as Protestants. A curious proof of this has just occurred. Some one has lately published a Prayer Book adapted to the use of Protestant churches, and an uncommon quantity of adaptation it wants. The reviser acts on the principle of the old rhyme:

"And since the Bible's not the true one,  
We'll change the text and make a new one;"

for he omits all mention of Bishops, even in Confirmation, he cuts out every thing which refers to the office of a Priest, he omits the Creeds, he strikes out everything which recognizes Baptism and the Holy Eucharist as conveying Sacramental grace; nay, he is not satisfied with the formula of Baptism, because it contains so express a recognition of the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity. Can a book be Protestant, which requires so much alteration to adapt it to the use of Protestants?

I have shown you what true Protestants agree in disbelieving: and I have said the Church of England believes it. Now we will try to find out what true Protestants agree in believing; and then, if we should find that the Church of England disbelieves that, we shall have a double reason why we cannot call ourselves Protestants.

We will proceed by stripping off one by one the doctrines which are not held by all sorts of Protestants, till we come, if it be possible, to a residuum of doctrine that is.

Are Presbyterians Protestants?  
Yes.  
Then Protestants, as such, do not believe in Episcopacy.  
Are Independents Protestants?  
Yes.  
Then Protestants, as such, do not believe in any established line of ministry.  
Are Anabaptists Protestants?  
Yes.  
Then Protestants, as such, do not believe in Infant Baptism.  
Are Quakers Protestants?  
Yes.  
Then Protestants, as such, do not believe in any Sacraments.  
Are the Swiss Calvinists Protestants?  
Yes.  
Then Protestants, as such, do not believe in the Atonement.  
Are the new school of German Lutherans Protestants?  
Yes.

Then Protestants, as such, do not believe in Original Sin.  
Are Socinians Protestants?  
Yes.  
Then Protestants, as such, do not believe in our Lord's Divinity.

I know not whether you ever happened to read the proceedings of a body calling itself the Evangelical Alliance. It is a sort of amalgamation of all religions and sects, agreeing to differ on all non-essential points, while they band themselves together to attack Rome. But, when they came to define what non-essentials were, they found that, if they did not draw an arbitrary line somewhere, they should absolutely be left without any positive belief at all. So, if I remember right, they drew it at our Lord's Divinity, and the Atonement.

(To be Continued.)

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