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ROMANISM AND THE NEGRO.*

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We clip the following from the *Chicago Advance*, of December 29, 1887:

"A band of Franciscan nuns have taken vows to devote their lives to missionary work among the negroes of the United States, particularly those of the South." The above indicates that the eye of the Church of Rome is on the South. This may be concluded not only from the above statement, but from other facts. Almost every Southern State has its adherents to the Roman Catholic religion among the colored people, and mission work among them is being done. Probably more is being done in Maryland and Louisiana than in any other States. In Alabama we have some of them. Here in Selma they have no mission, but within this few years they have established a large school for the whites. Doubtless this is a step toward work among the freedmen also. They have already been circulating their Catechisms among them. In Mobile they are doing something toward gathering in the children. They have seen what a fine field the South

* The Presbyterian Club of New York, at its meeting February 29th. discussed "The Relation of the Roman Catholic Church to our Common Work." Dr. Philip Schaff sketched the history of the Roman Catholic Church, drew a parallel between the position of the Apostles toward the Jewish Church and that of the Reformers toward the Catholic Church, and thought that, as the Catholic Church had survived the terrific shocks of the Reformation and stands to-day the largest visible Christian Church, God must have some great work for it to do. If immorality and infidelity are the great dangers of our time, the Catholic Church is the ally of the Protestant Church in the warfare against them.

The Rev. Dr. John Hall took a different view of the question. He thought there was no more reason to think that there was good in the Catholic Church, because it had lasted so long, than in some heathen religions, which have lasted much longer. The Catholic Church should be treated with Christian kindness, but not made the "mother Church," or be an ally."—ED.]

presents for their work. Power, both political and ecclesiastical, is the grand aim of the Romish Church. They perceive that if they can lay hold of the colored vote of the South, this will be a speedy and an almost direct way to secure power in this section of our country.

From the above clipping much may be inferred. Here are straws which indicate the way the wind is blowing. The Catholics propose to work among the colored people of the South. This they will do by establishing schools; these schools will be strictly Roman Catholic. The principles of that Church will be instilled if not directly taught. Doubtless all that are trained in these schools will go out adherents to their faith. The Papists know very well that if they succeed in getting the children, they will get the men and women, if not in this generation in the next. Their ultimate aim is to get them. Now there are several reasons why the South is a fine field for Roman Catholic success. We name only a few:

1. *The people are illiterate.* Whatever may be said about work, religious and educational, that has been done in the South, it must be admitted by those who are acquainted with the facts, that the masses are yet in absolute ignorance, in moral, spiritual, and intellectual darkness. It must also be admitted that it is upon such an element that the Church of Rome rather prefers to work. Ignorance is the medium through which Catholicism is propagated. "The mother of devotion," it presents a delightful field for priest craft. While the older people will not take very readily to Catholicism, yet if their children are placed in Catholic schools, future years will show that these children will be inclined to the Church that has them. At present very much will not be attempted with the parents; they will wisely wait in hope of getting the children.

2. *The people being illiterate, are inclined to those who are the kindest to them.* The colored people have been very unkindly treated by those who make the same religious profession with themselves. They have received worse treatment in civil and political relationship. Of this state of things the Church of Rome is hastily taking advantage; her craft is quick to lay hold of it. All possible kindness is shown to those the Church desires to gain. Advantage is taken of the caste prejudice that exists at the South. Roman Catholics claim that they know no "color line," but treat everybody alike. And when it comes to the matter of their religion this is about true. Nearly all the Southern Protestant Churches exclude even the most intelligent and respectable colored persons from worshiping with them; but Roman Catholic churches make no such discriminations. You can go into their churches and sit where you please, and you will be treated all right. This condition of things, at a time when the negro is so bitterly proscribed in this country, has great weight, especially with the uneducated and those who are not informed with regard to the principles of the Romish Church. In various ways, particularly in their

charities, the Roman Catholics show kindness to the colored people so as to win their favor.

3. *The negro has political power in the form of the ballot.* What we have said with reference to kindness of treatment in churches holds as good in politics. There is a willingness to grant the negro those rights that are denied him, in order to secure his vote. This also has great weight with the colored people. Because of this a prominent colored orator is said to urge his people to join the Catholic Church. It will be a sad day when the Catholics get control of the colored vote of the South. The freedmen are just now in that condition when they can be moulded into any sentiment; they will follow those who will be friendly to them, and treat them most kindly. Catholics see this; they will take advantage of it, not that they have any more love for the negro than anybody else, but because in gaining him they gain additional power.

The needs of the freedmen are great and manifold; there is great need of missionary work among them, but Roman Catholic missionaries are not needed, they are not desired. It will not be for the spiritual welfare of the colored people, nor for the temporal welfare of the nation that this sect enter the South as missionaries. Romanists know how to attract. They already have power in this country, and they have money; they can get money to do whatever they desire in furthering their schemes. They will not withhold money, but in order to have such things as will attract the unlettered freedmen, they will use it without stint. With grand buildings, attractive temples, and with much ceremonial display, they are sure to impress and to draw. We know full well how difficult it is to turn a Papist from his faith. If any influence, whether lawful or unlawful, is brought to bear upon the colored youth of the South to lead them into the Church of Rome, they will very likely remain there.

If Protestants are not active to occupy the Southern field, it will not be left long without religious occupants. Roman Catholics are already entering; their entering doubtless will be still more rapid in the future than in the past. Some may think there are no dangers to be feared from this direction; but we who are on the ground see things from a different point of view. And furthermore, danger in this direction not only means a sad state of things for the poor freedmen, who are already in great darkness, but it means danger to the whole nation. Our Republic is in danger. The awful oppression of the colored people of the South, in their present uneducated condition, will cause them to go anywhere, and to any people that will bring relief. But woe to them and to the Republic if they should betake themselves to the authorities of Rome! Let us think of these things; let us be wise; let us be active.