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PROTESTANTISM AND ROMANISM.

THE quiet of the Protestant Church has suffered no little disturbance of late, by the frequency of the transitions from its ranks, to the Church of Rome. In many instances, these defections have been on the part of men, of weight and decided depth of sanctity, earnestness and theological ability. It has been usual in such cases, to dismiss the whole matter, with but a passing notice of the fact, accompanied with perhaps a sneering expression of pity, in view of such an exhibition of extreme folly, the result either of mental imbecility, or of an hypocrisy more or less well concealed. Such has been the complacency and overweening confidence of many good men in the Protestant Church—such the ease with which they have conducted to its final resolution, much of perplexity and mystery, which engaged the prayers and spiritual travail of the Church of all ages, that should any one still be found, who unfortunately, is unable to sympathize in full measure in their confidence, he is set down as a proper subject for commiseration, or else despised as destitute of all moral principle. All this might do, and pass current

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## A WORD OF EXPLANATION.

No one will expect us, we presume, to take any notice of the billing-gate expended upon us, in the last number of the Philadelphia Protestant Quarterly, edited by the Rev. Dr. Berg. Like the crackling of thorns under a pot, it has already gone its way into smoke and ashes.

We have no wish to treat with the same contempt an article, which we find directed against us in the January number of the Church Review, the respectable Quarterly of the Episcopal church published at New Haven. It shows itself to be from the hand of one who has some learning, proposes a good and fair object, and though a little rough occasionally in its manner appears to be on the whole sufficiently good natured and free from ugly bigotry and malevolence. But really it goes on such a misapprehension throughout of the drift and purpose of what we have said about the early fathers, that we find no room for honoring it with anything like a formal and regular reply. The idea of the writer seems to be, if we understand him properly, that we have been secretly proposing to stab the credit of these ancient worthies, by showing them to have been the patrons of celibacy, purgatory, veneration for relics and other such like roots and germs of the so called Roman superstition of later times. As the Jesuits in the days of Charles the First are charged with preaching Presbyterianism in England, for the purpose of bringing the cause of Protestantism into bad odor and repute, overshooting thus the *via media* of Anglicanism more out of zeal against it than for it; so in the present case, *mutatis mutandis*, it would appear that *we* are shrewdly suspected of being after all no better than a capped Puritan, out-Heroding Herod in the matter of church antiquity, only to make the *via media* suspicious again on the contrary side. Anglicanism loves antiquity; but not in too strong doses; holding the principle here, and laying down the maxim that *too much* even of a good thing is good for nothing. The main object of our learned reviewer is, accordingly, to show in short compass the true value and proper use of the Christian Fathers, whose comfortable repose he thinks in danger of being unsettled and disturbed by the intermeddling of the Mercersburg Review. We cannot say that the elucidation is very clear or satisfactory. We learn from it, that two extremes are to be religiously avoided; we must not make too little of the fathers, namely, like the universal school of Geneva, and we must not make too much of them, like the

church of Rome. The true happy mean between these errors of too little and too much, is exhibited to us in the better theology of the Anglican church; which having fortunately lighted on the right ecclesiastical scheme in the age of the Reformation, had nothing to do afterwards but to read this faithfully *into* the fathers, so much exactly and no more, in order to understand them as no part of the world ever understood them before.

In justice to the reviewer, it ought perhaps to be added that his strictures are based altogether on the first of our articles on Early Christianity, the second and third not having yet come under his eye. With the whole discussion before him, he could not surely have dreamed that our object was to make the fathers of no authority, by making them apparently to be of too much.

The reviewer however very magisterially charges us with rashness, in what we have said of the Romanizing tenets of the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries. Our allegations, he says, are vague and dictatorial; and we are more familiar, it is intimated, with second hand authorities, than with the *unromanized* editions of the fathers themselves. "No one knows," we are told, "what a regular trade Rome has driven in poisoning the fountains of antiquity, but those who have explored those fountains with cautious and fatiguing diligence"—a task, as this implies, which has been duly performed by our learned deponent himself. But we have seen no evidences as yet to show, that our allegations have been rash. We have found them corroborated at least by very respectable authority, in other quarters. We have not pretended at the same time to any extraordinary personal familiarity with the writings of the fathers; but neither have we felt, nor do we now feel, that this is necessary at all for any such general judgment as that which we have ventured to express; for it is so framed purposely as to take in broad and open facts only, that lie as it were on the surface of history, without depending at all on single texts or controverted readings. The doctrine of *purgatory*, our critic tells us, was not settled before the fourteenth century. And yet, we find it treated in form by Thomas Aquinas, and we know well enough besides that it was of universal force throughout the middle ages; so that it is the rashness of our very learned censor here, "considered as a scholar merely" which rather than our own deserves we think to be regarded as even more than "somewhat wonderful." But we need not come down to the middle ages. Who that has read so much only as Augustine's Confessions needs to be informed, that the practice of praying for the dead was in his time fully established? Or who can require to be told, that this

practice of itself implies the fundamental conception of purgatory, a condition after death which calls for further *purgation* in the case of some before they can come to full rest? It may be said, that the notion of penal suffering in the case was greatly extended in later times. Be it so; that is a matter of controversy which we have purposely avoided. Our allegation regards only the general notion itself; and for the settlement of that, no great amount certainly of patristic lore or criticism is needed. It is perfectly plain that the article of purgatory, so far as the primary conception of it is concerned, was in full vogue in the days of Augustine and Chrysostom; and that the faith of that period was accordingly in full contradiction here, as well as at other points not a few, to the whole system of modern Protestantism, whether Anglican or Puritan.

Another point in regard to which the reviewer finds us blind and rash, is the *primacy* of Peter, which we are said to confound with the idea of his supremacy. On this subject, we have had some friendly expostulation also from other quarters. Let it be observed, however, that we have not pretended to fix and settle in any way the amount of jurisdiction, which belonged in the Nicene period to the see of Rome; much less to make it of one and the same order, in all respects, with the claims of the Papacy in the middle ages. Our representation has been so worded, as purposely to avoid every question of this sort, by confining itself to the most general view of the primacy, and that which must be considered as underlying the whole doctrine whether held in a higher or lower form. The amount of what we have wished to say is simply this: That the unity of the church, in the first ages, was held to be indispensable to the mystery of its existence and power—That this was taken to stand in the episcopate, as the proper succession of the Apostolical office—That such prerogative belonged to the episcopate only *in solido*, or to the episcopal college as a whole, which in the nature of the case however must have in such view its own proper centre—That the centre of the original college of the Apostles was St. Peter—That the Roman see, as the *cathedra Petri*, was distinctly acknowledged to be the seat of a similar primacy or centrality afterwards for the universal episcopate, and so we may say also for the universal church. The Epistles of Ignatius, as Professor Rothe has shown we think with overwhelming evidence, are based throughout on this theory, and show it to have been involved in the catholic idea of the church from the beginning. It comes into view plainly enough again in Irenæus and Tertullian, and also in Clement of Alexandria and Origen;

while in Cyprian it is brought out with the most explicit particularity and detail. It is not necessary here to waste time on the question, whether some one passage or so of this writer, directly asserting the primacy of the Roman see, is to be regarded as genuine or spurious; back of every such single dubious text is the universal theory and scheme of the writer, plainly requiring its own consequences, which is of far more weight than any single text separately taken; and what may be doubtful in the case of one passage, is fully made good, as Neander remarks, by the authority of another. The critical settlement of a disputed reading may be of account, for determining the relation of the older view of the ecclesiastical order now under consideration, to the view taken of it afterwards by the Roman church. But for the general fact of this order itself, which is all we have to do with here, it is of no account whatever. We have not said, that the idea of the central position of the Roman see was answerable at all points, in the Nicene period or in the time of Cyprian, to the full-blown Papacy of the middle ages. It is enough for us to know, that the unity of the church was taken to stand in the solidarity of the episcopate, and that the proper radix and matrix of the whole system, as Cyprian has it, was felt to be the *cathedra Petri*, kept up by regular succession in the church of Rome.

“Nemo fraternitatem mendacio fallat,” Cyprian writes, (*De Unitate Eccl.* §. 5.) “nemo fidei veritatem perfida praevaricatione corrumpat. Episcopatus unus est, cujus a singulis in solidum pars tenetur. Ecclesia quoque una est, quae in multitudinem latius incremento fecunditatis extenditur, quemodo solis multi radii, sed lumen unum, et rami arboris multi, sed robur unum tenaci radice fundatum, et cum de fonte uno rivi plurimi defluent, numerositas licet diffusa videatur exundantis copiae largitate, unitas tamen servatur in origine. Avelle radium solis a corpore, divisionem lucis unitas non capit; ab arbore frangerum, fractus germinare non poterit; a fonte praecide rivum, praecisus arescit. Sic et ecclesia Domini, etc.”

This we are very sure is not modern Puritanism. But neither does it suit modern Anglicanism. After all, however, it is only one phase among many of the broad difference there is, between Cyprian's Christianity and the Anglican system. The two schemes have in fact very little in common.

J. W. N.