

THE CHURCH OF ROME.

The Church of Rome, in its ecclesiastical and political aspect, is a system of gigantic fraud, delusion and slavery. This has been its distinguishing character for the past 1200 years. The monstrous and unwarrantable assumption of the right to dictate to, and control the conscience of mankind has been the instrument employed by its hierarchy to perpetuate the more than "Egyptian bondage" over the minds of millions of the human race. Its history, its aim, its scope in civil and religious matters is not toleration, nor freedom, nor equality, but supremacy. All other interests must be subordinated to hers. Nothing less will satisfy her claim. When and where she has the power of asserting these claims of supremacy she tramples on all other human rights, and compels obedience to her stern mandates.

This has been her history in the past. Our experience of her workings and aims at the present is identically the same. It is not possible that it could be otherwise. Why? Because the proud boast of Rome which is ever dauntingly emblazoned on her banners is "Semper eadem," that is, always the same. And we know, too, that the boast and the pride of her votaries is, "Roman Catholics first, and Citizens after, if you please."

In view of these facts, it surely becomes a serious, and all-important question with American citizens how long, and to what extent will they tolerate such attempts at supremacy? Remember that is the genius of Romanism; and she is always the same, as unchanged as she is unchangeable in her faith, her doctrine, her practice, and, of course, her aims. Will the American people, then, passively submit to the dictation, in civil and religious matters to a priest of Rome? Will they tamely surrender their birth-right of freedom to any ecclesiastical or political domination? Will the free genius of the American people blindly, or unthinkingly accept the thralldom of an Italian bishop and his emissaries? Will the loyalty to the free institutions of our republic—to secure which patriots fought and bled—be now set aside as a thing of no value? Will the sacred and inestimable blessings of civil and religious liberty be suffered to be usurped by enemies of both.

But, some will answer, these are not endangered. Are they not? "Oh! fools and slow of heart" to realize that it is whilst "men slept, the enemy sowed tares." So, too, while we are sleeping, the emissaries of Rome are ever on the alert, ever watchful, ever seeking in every form to control the institutions and government of our country. To do this they will avail themselves of every possible means, especially of a class of politicians who are ever willing to identify themselves with Rome, and who, like the degenerated priests of Israel, clamor for "a little office, that may eat bread." Provided they become the ready and willing tools of the emissaries of the Papacy, they are so rewarded—but at what a cost?

Romanism, we say, is both a political and an ecclesiastical system. It is specially important to remember this. In a series of articles we shall treat of

its phases. The above is simply an introduction. In the following we must substantiate the statement made that it is a system of gigantic fraud, delusion, and slavery. This we will undertake to prove by an appeal to her own standards of faith, and doctrine, and practice, as taught and enforced by her bishops and priests, and believed in by the great body of their co-religionists—and by the clearest testimony of scripture, history, and common sense.

But some will say, oh Roman Catholicism is different now in faith and practice to what it was in the mediæval ages. Why not "let the past dead bury its dead?"

Is it different? Allow themselves, please, to speak. Their church never changes. Is not this enough? Whatever in faith, in dogma, in practice, the Church of Rome was in all ages in her history the same she is today without change—the same she will ever continue in her history. This is her own claim, we cannot go beyond it.

Protestants, as a rule, are culpably ignorant of the tenets of Romanism. Few of them take the trouble or interest to inform themselves on its tendency or teaching. If they did they would at once know that it could not essentially change without destruction; and that hence it professes to be unchangeable.

The creed of Pope Pius IV, bearing date November, 1564, affirms that the "church hath held her doctrines as she now holds them." Pope Gregory XVI, in his encyclical letter of August 15th, 1832, says: "Ever bearing in mind that the universal church suffers from every novelty, as well as the admonition of the Pope, St. Agatha, that from what has been regularly defined, nothing can be taken away, no innovation introduced there, no addition made; but that it must be preserved untouched as to words and meaning. Again he declares, "It is no less absurd than injurious to her (Church of Rome) than anything by way of restoration, or regeneration, should be forced upon her as necessary for her soundness or increase, as if she could be thought obnoxious to decay, to obscurities, or to any other such inconveniences." Please, bear in mind that these are the words of Infallibility! Again, Mr. Charles Butler in his book of the Roman Catholic church, states, "It is, indeed, most true that the Roman Catholics believe the doctrines of their church to be unchangeable, and that it is a tenet of their creed that what their faith ever has been such it now is, and such it ever will be.

Now, as Roman Catholics claim this immutability, can we be charged with uncharitableness in showing forth its true nature, tendency, design, faith, and practice as a system.

The Protestant world has been asleep for nearly the past two hundred years regarding the Papacy. Meanwhile it has been wakefully using every stratagem, and strenuously employing every means and agency not alone for its preservation, but for its extension.

Recently in this city much has been said and written regarding the beauty and purity, superior merit and sanctity of a life of enforced celibacy among the priesthood. Before we trace the

origin, history, and practical results of unnatural and unscriptural restraint on human nature, we wish distinctly to state that we will make no assertion except what can be substantiated by the testimony of acts of parliament, decrees of their own councils, the records of legislation, and the confessions of their own writers.

As setting forth in general terms the pernicious fruits of celibacy read what the Rev. Joseph Blanco White, who was a Spanish priest of great celebrity, and of unquestionable veracity, says of the character of the clergy of his country:

"My feelings are painfully vehement when I dwell upon this subject. That neither the freedom I have enjoyed so many years, nor the last repose of the victims, the remembrance of whom still wrings tears from my eyes, can allay the bitter pangs of my youth; are proofs that my views arise from a real, painful, and protracted experience. Devoted to the ecclesiastical profession from the age of fifteen, when I received the minor orders, I lived in constant friendship with the most distinguished youths, who, in my town were preparing for the priesthood. Men of the first eminence in the church were the old friends of my family, my parents and my own spiritual directors. Thus I grew up, thus I continued in mankind, till, at the age of five and thirty, religious oppression and that alone forced me away from kindred and country. The intimacy of friendship, the undisguised converse of sacramental confession, opened to me the hearts of many, whose exterior conduct might have deceived a common observer. The coarse frankness of associate dissoluteness left indeed no secrets among the spiritual slaves, who, unable to separate the laws of God from those of their tyrannical church, trampled both under foot in riotous despair. Such are the sources of the knowledge I possess. God, sorrow, and remorse are my witnesses.

A more blameless, ingenious, religious set of youths than that in the enjoyment of whose friendship I passed the best years of my life, the world cannot boast of, eight of us, nearly all of the same age, lived in the closest bond of affection, from sixteen till one and twenty; and four at least, continued in the same intimacy till about thirty-five. Of this knot of friends, not one was tainted by the breath of gross vice till the church had doomed them to a life of celibacy, and turned the best affections of their heart into crime. It is the very refinement of church cruelty to say they were free when they deprived themselves of their natural rights. Less, indeed, would be the unfeelingness of a parent, who, watching a moment of generous excitement, would deprive a son of his birth-right, and doom him by a voluntary act, to pine away through life in want and misery.

A virtuous youth of one-and-twenty who is made to believe christian perfection inseparable from a life of celibacy, will easily overlook the dangers which beset that state of life. Those who made, and those who still support the unnatural law, which turns the mistaken piety of youth into a source of future vice, ought to have learned

mercy from their own experience, but a priest who has waded (as most do) through the miry slough of a life of incessant temptation, falling and rising, stumbling, struggling, and falling again, without at once casting off Catholicism with christianity, contracts, generally, habits of mind not unlike those of the guards of oriental beauty. Their hearts have been seared with envy.

I cannot think of the wanderings of the friends of my youth without heart-rending pain. One, now no more, whose talents raised him to one of the highest dignities of the church of Spain was, for many years, a model of purity. When, by the powerful influence of his mind, and the warmth of his devotion, this man had drawn many into the clerical and religious life, (my youngest sister among the latter), he sunk at once into the grossest and most daring profligacy. I heard him boast that the night before the solemn procession of Corpus Christi, where he appeared nearly at the head of his chapter, one of two children had been born which his two concubines brought to light within a few days of each other. The intrigues of ambition soon shared his mind with the pursuit of pleasure; and the fall of a Potentate, whom he took the trouble to instruct in the policy of Machiavel, involved him in danger and distress for a time. He had risen again into court influence when death cut him off in the flower of life. I had loved him when both our lives were pure. I had loved him when Catholicism had driven us both from the path of virtue; I still love, and will love his memory, and hope that God's mercy has pardoned his life of sin, without imputing it to the abettors of the barbarous laws which occasioned his spiritual ruin."

Such, more or less, has been the fate of my early friends whose minds and hearts were much above the common standard of the Spanish clergy. What then need I say of the vulgar crowd of priests, who, coming, as the Spanish phase has it, from coarse swaddling clothes and raised by ordination to a rank of life for which they have not been prepared, mingle vice and superstition, grossness of feeling, and pride of office in their character? I have known the best among them; I have heard their confessions; I have heard the confessions of young persons of both sexes who fell under the influence of their suggestions and example; and I do declare that nothing can be more dangerous to youthful virtue than their company. How many souls would be saved from crime, but for the vain display of pretended superior virtue which Rome demands of her clergy!—Taken from White's practical and internal evidence against Catholicism, pages 132-137, 8vo., 2nd. edition. London. 1826.

A MINISTER.

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