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THE  
FAILURE OF PROTESTANTISM  
AS A  
SYSTEM OF FAITH.

A LECTURE

BY

VERY REV. THOMAS S. PRESTON, V. G.,

IN

St. Ann's Church,

SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 23, 1877.

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*STENOGRAPHICALLY REPORTED FOR THE PUBLISHER.*

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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THE following is the stenographic report of the fourth of a series of Advent Lectures which I delivered in St. Ann's Church. I have consented to its being reported and published in the hope that some good may come from its perusal. There are honest minds to whom the simple argument of the lecture may address itself. That cannot be the truth of God which is subject to any variation, nor can the system of religion which produces discord be divine. For those who care not for the testimony of facts, and who will listen to no argument, there is little hope. But a few years will demonstrate that Protestantism has ceased to be a living power on earth, and that we have only to fear bold and unmasked infidelity. May God avert from our beloved country the evils which must flow from the denial of God and His Christ. T. S. P.

NEW YORK, ST. JOHN'S DAY, 1877.



## LECTURE.

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IN the first chapter of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, the 11th and 12th verses, you will find these words :

“ They shall perish, but thou shalt continue : and they shall all grow old like a garment. And as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed : but thou art the self-same, and thy years shall not fail.”

In the preceding lectures of this brief course we have considered the attitude of the Church towards the world, the discharge of her duties towards the temporal power, and her prerogatives in the great work of education. That work of education is nothing less than the cultivation of man for the duties of life as a preparation for his eternal destiny. The Church has seen nearly nineteen centuries of various trials and vicissitudes, and nevertheless, in spite of every difficulty and every opposition, she has continued in the discharge of her high function. The past is an evidence of her future; and that she will continue to the end in the performance of her high duty, in the fulfilment of her divine commission, rests not only on the evidence of her past and wonderful life, but on the power of that God who made her and sent her forth into the world to teach all nations and to reduce them to the obedience of faith. Yet for the last three hundred years the Catholic Church has been confronted with a rival Christianity. There have arisen from her own bosom various sects, with different doctrines, and yet professing to be Christian sects, and maintaining to a greater or less degree the Christian Faith. They have

gone out of her because they have denied her creed and have renounced her authority. They have grown by the strength of the world and by the patronage of the rich and the great. They have derived their attraction from the liberty they have offered to the human reason and to the human will. And now, after three hundred years of wonderful activity, the great question arises, Has this system succeeded or has it failed?

We call it by the name of Protestantism, because that is the name which it has usurped for itself. And although in that name is contained no affirmative character, yet nevertheless it symbolizes the nature of the Christianity which protests against the old and ancient faith, and stands arrayed against the Catholic Church.

I speak to-night only of systems and creeds. I speak not of individuals nor their responsibility before the bar of God; but it is a most important question for every sincere and thoughtful man who believes in God or Revelation, whether this system has succeeded or whether it has failed. Three hundred years are long enough to try and test a system of religious belief. In answering this question I do not mean to contend that numerically the system of belief called Protestantism has not succeeded, as it has drawn many from the Catholic Church, so that even nations have fallen from her ranks. I mean to ask the question whether as a system of faith, holding and swaying the minds of men and influencing them for their best and highest duties, it has succeeded or failed?

I do not think, dearly beloved brethren, that there is a single question in all the range of enquiry that is more important than this, and to the answer of this question I invite your earnest and most sincere attention.

The argument by which I shall endeavor to prove to your intelligence that this system has failed is three-fold. The first is an intrinsic argument: Faith is one and unchangeable; that cannot be a divine system of



faith which of its very nature leads to disunion, and destroys the possibility of unity in belief. But such is the system of Protestantism; therefore that system is not divine. Secondly, an extrinsic proof: That cannot be a system of God, nor has it succeeded, which breaks into pieces the sacred articles of our Christian Creed and leads to every diversity and shade of possible opinion. But such, as a matter of fact, is the system of faith called Protestantism, and therefore it is not of God, and it has failed. Lastly, That system of religion has failed which is not able to be a guide to man either in faith, or in the duties of his life on earth, or in morals. But such is the system of Protestantism, and therefore that system of religious belief has deplorably and miserably failed.

## I.

To our first argument we then proceed. It is an intrinsic argument, founded on the very nature of truth, whereby that system which in itself produces disunion and destroys the possibility of unity in belief fails, and therefore is not of God. I need not demonstrate to any intelligent mind that God is one; for if God be not one, there is no God. The very perfections of God which are necessary to His existence demonstrate His unity. But God is truth, therefore as God is one, so is truth one; and although the full view of truth belongs only to the infinite mind, yet nevertheless to the finite mind that truth which is presented must necessarily be one. It cannot come with variations, for if it come with variations it comes not at all. The unity of faith is therefore involved in the very nature of truth, which is founded in the very nature of God Himself. And here a partial truth is partial error; and partial error, being a travesty of the truth, is the most dangerous of all forms of error, because most likely to deceive.

Secondly, God himself is not only the truth but He is

the source of the truth. I know nothing except that which I derive from God. In His light I see. All the beams of His being illumine my whole intellect, and I know nothing which I know not by Him and in Him and through Him. In Revelation, whereby He is pleased to convey to the mind of man a knowledge of truth which otherwise he cannot have, all depends on the veracity of God. Now, in the source of truth, which is God, there is neither variation nor shadow of turning, and whoever receives a Revelation receives it because it is from God, and, receiving it from God, receives it full and entire. And he that receives it not whole and entire receives it not at all, for it depends on the veracity of God. If one part of Revelation be true so is the other, for all stand on the same foundation. From the fact, therefore, that God Himself is the source of truth we deduce the argument that truth as it comes to our minds must be one and unchangeable.

Again, a system of faith may be considered either in the abstract or in the concrete. In the abstract it is a certain creed, or a certain circle of divine and necessary truths. In the concrete it is a body possessing a knowledge of those truths, with power to teach, and power to impress those truths upon the conscience. But the sole end of a system of religious belief is to produce union. The sole end of a creed is to enunciate a divine truth which is to be received on the authority of God. The great end of a professing body or church is to teach the truth, and there is no conceivable reason for the existence of a belief except for the end of unity in the minds of men, and that the beams of that gracious light may come into our hearts and be preserved for our illumination and for our sanctification. So much for the major proposition of our first syllogism. The minor is very easily proved, for the system of belief among Protestants is such that unity of faith is impossible. There is no living authority. There is no voice

that speaks to the minds of men, and where there is no living voice which we feel bound to obey there is no possibility of union of belief. Moreover, the very essential characteristic of Protestantism is to assert the independence of the human reason in its own sphere, and even in the sphere of Revelation, and to subject the truths of Revelation to the minds of individuals for their own judgment. The doctrine of private judgment, as commonly understood, is the very essential characteristic of Protestantism. All things are subjected to the judgment of the individual, whatever they may be. He is to receive no truths unless these truths suggested are approved by his reason. Every individual, therefore, is the sole judge. And observe, he is the judge not simply of the extrinsic credibility of Revelation or the truth proposed, but also of its intrinsic credibility.

If the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, for example, be not in accordance with my own judgment I am not bound to accept it. If the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God be not approved, I am free to reject it, and so it is with all the doctrines of Christianity. And even if you present a Bible and call it the divine Word, with or without authority, that Bible is subjected to every individual reason and made to speak not its own page but the mind of the reader, and the preconceived creed of the man who is its student. There is therefore intrinsically in Protestantism not only the evidence of disunion, but there is the very power that must produce disunion. Therefore in every case, intrinsically, without one extrinsic argument the system of Protestantism falls to the ground ; because faith in God is one, even as God is one ; because it leads logically and certainly to the destruction of all unity of belief.

## II.

We proceed to our second argument. That system is not from God, and has miserably failed, which, as a

matter of fact, has broken into pieces the Christian Creed and left us nothing but a fragmentary Christianity. Such is the system of which we speak, and therefore it is not of God and has deplorably failed. There is no need to prove the major proposition of this syllogism, because I have already proved it and it needs no further argument. I need only to prove the minor proposition and show that the system of Protestantism, extrinsically and as a matter of fact, has broken the Christian Creed into fragments and produced every shade of diversity of religious opinion. Variations in themselves are a contradiction of unity. I need not argue this statement; and there is no need of variation except there be diversity of belief. No church proposes a new creed except on the ground of difference of belief, and if you take the system of Protestantism together, its contradictions neutralize the whole body of Christian truth. If you take its negations you have nothing left. One sect neutralizes the other, and therefore the whole Christian Creed fails, and there is no single sect where the symbol of religion stands firm and unbroken. There is no sect where the original articles of Christian faith are kept entire in the heart as well as on the lips. We have also to remember that every sect stands on the same authority. They all stand upon the authority of human right and private judgment, and so no one single sect can call another into question or assert its superiority, for they all stand on the same foundation and are of equal weight before the conscience and before the intelligence. The progress of Protestantism has been a continual variation from greater to less, from something to nothing, until now, in our day, the great articles of Christian faith, so dear to every heart, are almost gone, and, even among sects that call themselves Christian, have no power to govern the heart or influence the life. To prove these statements, I have only to notice the external, and, secondly, the internal variations. As far as regards the

external, you need only to turn your eyes to the forms of that rival Christianity which stand opposed to us. We are one over the face of the earth. We are one in the confession of the one faith, and among our two hundred millions there is no man, woman, or child who does not profess identically the same faith. Opposed to us you have continual divergence, sects almost countless. I would not even undertake to number them, for their name is legion, and they increase day by day. From one in the early days of the separation from The Church, there soon became three, from the three many, and from the many they have continued to be of an increasing number until now. God only knows how many there are. The right to make a church, if it be a human right, belongs to every man; therefore, according to this principle, there can be as many churches as there are men, and no individual has a right to call in question the extent of the private judgment or the weight of its authority.

It will, however, be more interesting if I venture to call your attention to the variations of the Protestant creed; for this is a matter to which perhaps you have not paid much attention, and it deserves deep study and reflection. If I show you in a few words to-night the evidence of the different variations of Protestant creeds, I will certainly prove this part of my argument, which demonstrates extrinsically that Protestantism is the source of discord and disunion. While I read to you the language of these creeds I beg your serious attention, even at the cost of some weariness in listening. It is a matter, however, of record, and perhaps speaks more to the point than any words of mine, which would seem to have only the weight of my own authority.

The first and original creed of the Protestants is the Augsburg Confession, made in the year 1530, under the influence of Luther and his followers. I do not propose, for I cannot undertake in one lecture, to set forth the

variations in all points of the creed ; I simply take up one or two, and especially one central point: the belief of the real presence of our Lord in the Divine Eucharist. From divergence on this point you will easily pass to divergences on other points. The Augsburg Confession in 1530 says :

*Art. X.* "Of the Supper of the Lord they teach that the true body and blood of Christ are truly present, under the form of bread and wine, and are there communicated to those that eat in the Lord's Supper."

Again :

*Art. XI.* "Concerning Confession, they teach that private absolution be retained in the churches." "It is not usual to communicate the body of our Lord except to those who have been previously examined and absolved."

The Small Catechism of Luther, made in 1529, has these very words :

"Confession comprehends two parts—one, that we confess our sins ; the other, that we receive absolution from the father Confessor, as from God himself."

"The Sacrament of the Altar is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, given under the bread and wine."

The Reformation had been in existence a very few years, when instantly there arose great divergences and differences. An attempt was made by the Reformers to set up the Formula of Concord in 1576, revised in 1584. This formula thus reads :

"We believe, teach, and confess that in the Lord's Supper the body and blood of Christ are truly and substantially present, and that they are truly distributed and taken together with the bread and wine," "not only spiritually, through faith, but also by the mouth."

The same Formula of Concord was directed against the Calvinists who immediately arose in France and Switzerland, and condemns the doctrine of Election—

“that some men are destined to destruction by the mere counsel, purpose, and will of God, so that they cannot in any way attain to salvation.” The same formula condemns the Anabaptists, who had arisen and become a strong power in Germany and other parts of Europe.

In 1523, a very short time after the beginning of Luther, there arose Zwingli, who had an entirely different doctrine. Let us see what his doctrine is. He is the father of a large progeny ; he is the father of a great many children who may have more or less continued in the belief of their parent. “God only remits sins. The confession made to a priest or to a neighbor is not for the forgiveness of sin, but only for consultation.” “The Mass is not a Sacrifice, but only a commemoration of the sacrifice of the Cross.”

The Theses of Berne, made in 1528, contain this language: “That the Body and Blood of Christ are essentially and corporally in the Eucharistic bread cannot be proved from sacred Scripture.”

The Saxon Visitation articles, which were made in 1592 thus teach: “The body and blood of Christ are received in the Supper, not only spiritually, which might be done out of the Supper, but by the mouth with the bread and wine.” And they condemn the doctrine, “That Christ is present by His virtue and operation only, and not in His body.” They also condemn the doctrine, “That God created the greater part of mankind for eternal damnation, and that Christ died for the Elect only.”

You will not fail to see here the divergences that existed in the various camps of the Reformers ; and these divergences are not so great as those that have since manifested themselves and of which you yourselves may be conscious.

The first Helvetic Confession, made in the year 1536, declares: “The Body and Blood of the Lord are not naturally united to the bread and wine, nor really in-

cluded in them, nor is there any carnal presence.” And the second Helvetic Confession, which is of greater authority than the first, thus speaks: “We do not so join the Body of the Lord with the bread, that we may say that the bread is the Body of Christ, or that there is any corporeal presence under the bread. The Body of Christ is in heaven at the right hand of the Father.”

The Heidelberg Catechism, made in 1563, thus speaks: “As the water in Baptism is not changed into the blood of Christ, so also in the Lord’s Supper the sacred bread does not become the body of Christ itself.”

Let us pay attention for one moment to the French Confession of 1559, prepared by Calvin; revised by a Synod at Paris in 1559; delivered by Beza to Charles IX. in 1561; adopted by the Synod of Rochelle in 1571, and sanctioned by Henry IV. This confession adheres to the doctrine of election in its strongest terms: “God calleth those whom he hath chosen by His goodness, without consideration of their works, to display in them the riches of His mercy, leaving the rest in this same corruption and condemnation to show in them His justice.”

“The Lord’s Supper is a witness of the union we have with Christ—wherein, though He be in heaven, by the secret and incomprehensible power of His Spirit, He feeds us with the substance of His Body and Blood.” “Wherefore we reject the Enthusiasts and Sacramentarians who will not receive such signs and marks.”

The Belgic Confession in 1561, revised in 1619, declares: “God delivers from eternal perdition those whom of mere goodness he hath elected in Christ, without any respect to their works, leaving others in perdition.” “The bread and wine (as symbols) are received with our mouths. We receive by *faith* the true body and blood of Christ for the support of our spiritual life.”

The Scotch Confession also simply declares the symbolic nature of the Holy Eucharist in these words: “We



make distinction between Christ Jesus in His eternal substance, and the elements of the Sacramental signs, so that we will not worship the signs in place of that which is signified in them.”

The Articles of the Church of England, made in 1563, revised in 1571, and revised in this country in 1801, teach: “The Body of Christ is taken, given, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner, and the mean whereby it is eaten is *Faith*.” They therefore teach that Sacraments are *signs* only of *grace*. They reject five of the Seven Sacraments, and assert Predestination without the Reprobation clause.

The Lambeth Articles, made in 1595, a Calvinistic appendix to the XXXIX. Articles of the Church of England, approved by a number of English Bishops and the two Archbishops, but not sanctioned by Elizabeth, thus speak: “There is a certain number of the predestinate. Those who are not predestined to salvation shall be necessarily damned for their sins.”

The Irish Articles, made in 1615, composed by Archbishop Usher, adopted by the Irish Bishops and Convocation, assert the doctrine of predestination to eternal life and eternal death, and also the symbolic character of the Eucharist. The Synod of Dort, made in 1619, also asserts the doctrine of Predestination and the Reprobation of those who are not elect. “Those not elected God hath decreed to leave in the common misery, and to punish them for ever, for the declaration of His justice.”

We come now to the Westminster Confession, an Assembly of divines held in 1647 by authority of Parliament. This confession is the basis of nearly all the Protestant creeds that exist, although to a great extent it has been rejected, and even where it exists in the various books of the Protestant Church it is not believed. The Westminster Confession teaches that angels and men predestinated are unchangeably designed, nor can

their number be increased or diminished. It also teaches that "Elect infants only are saved." "The body and blood of Christ are not corporally or carnally in, with, or under the bread and wine ; yet as really but spiritually present to the faith of believers as the elements themselves are to the outward senses."

In 1833 the Congregational Union of England published a Creed which contains, to a certain extent, a repetition of the Westminster Confession after various rejections and amendations. It holds the Lord's Supper to be only a token of faith in the Saviour and of brotherly love ; and the same is expressed by the Baptist Confession in 1688, and also the Baptist Confession in this country, made more recently, in 1833, 1834, and in 1868.

The Methodist Church, a large body of Protestant Christians, has adopted the XXXIX. English Articles, leaving out the doctrine of Predestination. The Reformed Episcopalians, only organized a few years ago, in 1875, publish their Confession, and have eliminated from the XXXIX. Articles every possible assertion of Sacramental life, or any Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

The Quakers made a Confession of Faith in 1675, and they reject all Sacraments and all external signs, and hold only to the internal meaning of rites and symbols. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church has its confession, which denies the doctrine of Predestination contained in the Westminster Confession. The Evangelical Free Church of Geneva, that which is left of Calvin's work there, asserts only a moderate Calvinism. It asserts Election without Reprobation, and only the symbolic character of the Holy Eucharist.

Perhaps you will be surprised that in this brief narration I have presented the Creed of every important Protestant church that exists. Of the churches to-day that have written Creeds, many of them do not know them and practically do not hold them.

Before I leave this department of my subject I wish to read you a few sentences from a work by Dr. Döllinger, who just now, because he has apostatized from the Catholic Church, is highly regarded among Protestants, and seems to be very much venerated.

“In the history of Sects,” he says, “which are not sunk into an inert state of vegetation, it is common to find them proceeding by fits and starts from one extreme to the other; and it happens inevitably that the emanations of mere caprice groping in the dark, or of individual narrow-mindedness, have to serve as substitutes for the necessary results of organic institutions. Thus it happened that the two main branches of the American Puritans—the Presbyterians and Congregationalists—being dissatisfied with their Westminster Confession, have introduced into their various congregations or Synods a number of whimsical or extravagant Confessions of Faith; so that, according to the statement of the preacher Colton, some hundreds of these formulæ may be found among the Presbyterians, and you can hardly go from one town to another without coming upon a new creed, notwithstanding the similarity of the sect. Colton, who filled the most influential offices in the Presbyterian Church, relates that he himself has organized above fifteen Churches, and introduced into each of them a Confession of Faith drawn up by himself, but which had to be modified every time, according to the degree of his knowledge and the momentary character of his views. . . .”

“Even those theologians who boast particularly of their faithful devotion to the Lutheran system are not orthodox. ‘The fact is obvious to every one,’ says Julius Muller, ‘that among all the Lutheran theologians who have lately published any comprehensive works in the domain of doctrines of faith, there is not a single one who does not consider the Lutheran symbolic books as requiring modification in some point or other.’ And here come

into consideration definitions of profound importance. 'For many years,' said Ehrenberg, at the Berlin General Synod, 'he had been looking for a man who agreed in all points with the symbolic books of his confession, but as yet he had never found one. . . .'

"The Churches of the Reformation are in this predicament—they cannot subsist without a solemn Declaration from their clergy and a settled doctrine; and neither can they subsist if they have either the one or the other. On one side it is said: 'What can a Church be from which every symbol has vanished—what can it be but a Babel?' On the other side it is replied, and with perfect justice, too: 'A rigid binding down to symbols, in the present state of theology, can only lead to hypocrisy and intolerable violence to conscience. . . .'

"Then in the year 1853 it was declared, at a meeting in Berlin, 'that the Augsburg Confession should be regarded as the standard and expression of a common creed and doctrine.' This was the strongest and greatest effort at effecting a submission to a certain formula which had yet been made. The matter, however, though seriously proposed, was not seriously meant, for even those who were present assenting to such a proposition were thoroughly well aware that amongst themselves, and in all Germany, there was not a single theologian who did, in point of fact, accept all the articles of the Augsburg Confession. . . .'

"And then, where 'the Union' is most firmly established, the authority of the symbolical books is irremediably ruined. At church assemblies and pastoral meetings it has recently been declared that in Prussia, according to the Tenth Article, a person is free to partake of the Lord's Supper in three different senses—in the Lutheran, or the Calvinistic, or in accordance with the Union signification; and there are others also who maintain that there is nothing to prevent its being taken and understood in a fourth or a fifth sense. . . .'

“It is indisputably one of the most suggestive and, at the same time, widely comprehensive events in the later history of religion, that the doctrine which was peculiarly the foundation of the whole edifice of Protestant teaching should be scientifically prostrated completely to the earth.”

Mr. Froude, an author of wide influence among Protestants, has published a book very recently upon the “Decline of Protestantism.” In it he says: “Doctrines once thought to carry their own evidence with them in their inherent fitness for man’s needs have become, for some reason or other, less conclusively obvious. The state of mind to which they were addressed has been altered—altered in some way either for the worse or for the better. And where the evangelical theology retains its hold, it is rather as something which it is unbecoming to doubt than as a body of living truth which penetrates and vitalizes the heart.”

“The most honest, perhaps, are the most uncomfortable and most hesitating, while those who speak most boldly are often affecting a confidence which in their hearts they do not feel.” . . . “From some cause it seems they (*Protestant preachers*) dare not speak, they dare not think, like their fathers. Too many of them condescend to borrow the weapons of their adversaries. *They are not looking for what is true; they are looking for arguments to defend positions which they know to be indefensible.* Their sermons are sometimes sophistical, sometimes cold and mechanical, sometimes honestly diffident. Any way, they are without warmth and cannot give what they do not possess.”

Only a little while ago a synod of all the Presbyterians of the world was called, and bears the name of the Pan Presbyterian Council. The Resolutions of this Council as regards articles of faith I would beg you to hear: “That this council appoint a committee with instructions to prepare a report to be laid before the next General

Council, showing, in point of fact—1. What are the existing creeds and confessions of the churches composing this alliance, and what have been their previous creeds and confessions, with any modifications thereupon, and the dates and occasions of the same from the Reformation to the present day. 2. What are the existing formulas of subscription, if any, and what have been the previous formulas of subscription used in those churches in connection with their creeds and confessions. 3. How far has individual adherence to those creeds by subscription or otherwise been required from the ministers, elders, or other office-bearers respectively, and also from the private members of the same. And the council authorize the committee to correspond with members of the several churches throughout the world who may be able to give information; and they enjoin the committee, in submitting their report, not to accompany it either with any comparative estimate of those creeds or with any critical remarks upon their respective value, expediency, or efficiency.”

I cannot refrain from reading to you an account of a Berlin Synod which represents the Prussian Reformed Church, the most active Protestant body in Prussia. This Synod was held on the 31st of October, and on that day, 360 years before, Martin Luther nailed his thesis against the door of the Church of the Castle of Wittemberg. “Luther rose against Christ’s Vicar, and the apostate founders of the House of Brandenburg joined his standard.” Among the arrangements of the new organization it was proposed on this memorable day to hold a Synod in Berlin. . . .

“The Protestant population of the city of Berlin is fully a million, and this synod was the representative of this population in religious matters. Berlin boasts of being not only the capital of Germany, but also of German Protestantism. It is hard to say, after the proceedings of this Synod, that it can any longer claim to

be even Christian. It is painful to read the opening discourse of the President, and to reflect on his anomalous position. He is a man who still holds some of the capital doctrines of Christianity. He was addressing an assembly the majority of whose members were at best Deists, and yet were, by a legal fiction, constituted members of a professedly Christian body; he seems to be craving, as an act of mercy at their hands, that they will abstain from using the opportunity for further attacks against religion. But they had no intention to follow his advice or comply with his entreaties. At the very beginning they claimed the right of deciding what matters they would take into consideration, and what would be the order of their proceedings. . . .”

“The next business was to elect four Vice-Presidents, one of whom was to be a clergyman. The choice fell upon one who has publicly repudiated the Divinity of Our Lord, His miraculous birth, His resurrection, and the veracity of the Scriptures. The three lay Vice-Presidents, elected even by larger majorities, were all leaders of Liberal Protestantism, and two of them being proposers in the district Synod last May of the abolition of the Apostles’ Creed. To crown the proceedings, an anti-Christian preacher was elected by a sweeping majority as Deputy Vice-President. The infidel party were clearly resolved that the defenders of Christianity should, as far as possible, have no place in a Synod representing the Protestant Church of Berlin.”

I do not see after this plain evidence, which could be augmented to any extent, how any one can say that there is any flaw in the argument by which I have endeavored to prove the proposition that Protestantism as a matter of fact has failed and has broken Christianity into fragments. I would only revert to that language of Holy Scripture quoted as my text, which, in contradistinction to the everlasting and unchangeable unity of God, presents before mankind the ever-changing works

of man. Man cannot endure; but God is everlasting. "They shall perish, but thou shalt continue: and they shall all grow old as a garment. And as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the self-same, and thy years shall never fail."

### III.

I proceed, then, to the third argument in this lecture, by which I shall endeavor to demonstrate that the system of Protestantism has failed, because it is not able to guide men as a religion should guide them, either in faith or in the duties of daily life—which belong to men in this world—or even in morality. And when I have briefly set before you the proofs of these propositions, I am sure that the thesis which I have endeavored to present to you has been abundantly proved.

In the first place, the religion which calls itself Protestantism is not able to guide men in faith, and faith is that which man needs above all things. Faith is the light which guides him to his everlasting destiny. The light of this world is only a mere human light, which illumines him to the duties of the animal nature. Faith is the only light that shines beyond the grave, and lifts the dying to the true life with God, where he holds communion with his Creator and the spiritual world.

The system which calls itself Protestantism by its very nature denies its authority to teach; and no system without authority to teach can guide the minds of men. If I come to you with a pleading voice, saying: "I believe that I possess the truth, that such a proposition should be accepted," I merely present to your intelligence something you may reject or approve, according to your judgment; and you will reject or approve it according to the nature of your minds. Human minds are all different; you are free to reject or approve any merely



human proposition. But if I come to you as a representative of God, and with His power declare that I speak to you the language of God, then, and then only, can I give to you an article of faith. But there is not one single Protestant that allows for an instant the existence of any infallible authority on earth ; and where there is no infallible authority there is no teacher ; and where there is no teacher there is no faith. Protestantism presents to the world a book which it calls the Word of God, and on that word endeavors to found the edifice of a Christianity to be conformed to the judgment of every individual. I answer that no power on earth can prove that book to be the Word of God without the Catholic Church. Unless there be an infallible teacher outside of the written word, there is no argument which can logically establish the inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures.

The Protestants who, thank God, believe in the inspiration of the written word, either believe it without any reason whatever, or they believe it on the authority of the Catholic Church. They can never prove that inspiration either to their own minds, by stern logic, or to the mind of any one else. Then, what weapons has this system of belief to resist the infidelity of our day—to resist that power which comes like a rushing tide and sweeps away every foundation upon which our fathers rested ? They have none. They can point to no divine authority ; they possess none in themselves. They admit of none beyond themselves. They are in truth the mother of infidelity. Infidelity has sprung from their own religious system. For what is infidelity but the rejection of the Christian Creed ? And whence comes the rejection of the Christian Creed but from the assertion of the right to private judgment, to receive or reject the articles of Faith according to man's will ? No ; not only has the religion of Protestantism no power whatever to guide men in faith, or to preserve the essential teachings of Jesus Christ, but it is itself the mother of

constant differences, and, therefore, the producer of infidelity. These sects will have to be called to account before the bar of God for the wide-spread infidelity of the present day. The original Reformers who asserted their own private judgment separated themselves from the Catholic Church, and so in essence rejected the whole Christian Creed. You may reply that before their apostasy and unbelief there were recreant Catholics who denied the faith and refused to live according to the teachings of Christianity. Yes ; but they forsook the name of Christ, and lost the life which comes from His body, and were known as open heretics. In the earlier days there was but one standard of Christian Faith known and recognized, and that standard was the teaching of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. When that teaching is broken down, then the pillar of the truth falls, and there is nothing left but man's unaided reason, which is not able to cope with God's truth, or preserve mankind from the abyss of error and infidelity.

But, again, the Protestant religion is not only unable to give men faith ; it is unable to guide them in the duties of human life. I speak, with due respect, above all for individuals whom I revere and for whose salvation I pray night and day before God. The Protestant religion has no power in the world to teach men their duty. It has always bowed beneath power and authority, and lived by the strength of the greater and stronger. It has never had the force to stand up against oppression. It has taken refuge under the imperial patronage, and in its smile sought for prosperity. It has flattered kings and the rulers of empires. It has never in one single instance stood up for the right against injury and injustice. In our own day the greatest evils of the time are those which this system of religion fosters and patronizes. The laws of nations have no binding force on men ; and there is not one Protestant community that dares to bid the world listen and obey the voice of that

law. Once it was considered an infringement of the law for a stronger state to steal from a weaker either goods or territory ; now it is the doctrine of our day that might makes right, and that brute force justifies everything. There is now no difficulty in destroying the landmarks of our fathers. If a strong nation desires to take the territory of a weaker, let it take it ; and if it succeeds, success justifies the act. There is no moral power in the Protestant religion to testify with perseverance for God and justice. In our own country they that cry loudest for liberty, equality, and fraternity, they that cry out against the tyranny of the Catholic Church, and on whose lips are such words as “priestcraft” or “clericalism,” do not even think or understand that by their conduct they are overturning the well-laid foundations of our Republic. They advocate the right to rebel, the right of resistance to just authority. They urge the absolute right of the majority to trample on human laws, and they speak not when the law of God and the law of man conflict. Let the State usurp the rights of men, no voice comes up from their assembly to protest against it. In the great question of Christian education, when it is patent to the reason of any man that the child must be trained in the way he ought to go or else he will depart from it, they pass over all his guidance to the State. The State desires to take everything into its hands in order that it may build up an absolute power, and they gladly submit to its decree. We stand alone, and with the voice of the everlasting Gospel proclaim to mankind that that religion which Christ came into this world to preach, and for which He died, and for which He has purpled the earth with the blood of martyrs and saints, must everywhere be the inspirer of any just efforts to improve the mind or sanctify the heart. But no ; let the State rule everything ; let children be trained to be infidels ; let men bring up infidels to make law ; let God be banished from all schools and from all halls of legis-

lation, from the politics of our country. Would to God it were otherwise! But the Catholic Church stands alone fighting its battle against the wrong and in favor of the right. In every question of our higher life it stands alone, and imperial hosts and armies, with all the legion of so-called Christian sects, are arrayed against her.

Lastly, if the system called Protestantism is not able to guide men by a sure and certain path to Heaven, their true home, if it cannot point out to them their duties as citizens and parents, neither is it able to teach them a sound morality, or lead them in holiness and purity of life. I do not mean to say that there are any systems of religion which directly would teach immorality or violation of the divine law; but in the weakening of faith and the utter banishment of the supernatural, which is the result of their work, and in every variation from the Christian faith, they have conspired to drive God from the earth, from society, and from the heart, so that no longer does He live and reign among us. When belief in the divine law passes away, men will freely commit sin. Their passions excite them and their fleshly lusts are on fire. It is easier to sin than to resist sin. It is easier for man to fall, with his animal nature, than to rise up heroically for God and for virtue, and therefore he will surely fall when the restraints of religion and the fear of God are taken away from him. Now they have eliminated to a very great extent the doctrine of man's accountability, they have reduced to the very smallest degree the doctrine of final judgment. Belief in that accountability passes away from the mind of man as faith grows dark and fades away, and Hell—that tremendous punishment taught by the language of Holy Scripture and by the express and unmistakable words of our Lord Himself—passes away with its fires of terror. Perhaps it is because men live so without God that they dare not face the everlasting fire; perhaps it is because their con-

sciences accuse them, and when death approaches they would that God, with the terrors of His justice, should be withdrawn. With some exceptions, among Protestants the doctrine of punishment by eternal fire is freely rejected or wilfully laid aside. Only two Sundays ago a popular preacher, who has filled the world with his vapid sayings and contradictory statements on all religious points, ventured to use language which savors of blasphemy :

“I do swear by the wounds and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ that I believe the nature of God is to suffer rather than to let others suffer for his sake. Show me such a deity as orthodoxy describes sending these vast multitudes to hell in swarms, and I will show you a devil worse than the mediæval devil. Such a deity I will not worship, even if he sits on the throne of Jehovah. I will not worship cruelty. I won't, if I die for it. To such a heaven as his would be I don't want to go. Do men study the humanity that is in Christ's suffering that they may learn that his saints in glory dance over the myriad sufferers who have been swept like swarms of living flies to hell? I denounce it as infernal, by the Saviour on the cross, by the wounds in his hands, by his holy sepulchre—as a most hideous nightmare of theology.”

And a minister of the English Church, Canon of Westminster, thus preaches in Westminster Abbey :

“If this awful doctrine had to be decided by texts, then the original language must be appealed to, and interpreted in its proper and historical significance. They would have to be interpreted not in that sense which makes them convey a thousand notions which did not originally belong to them. Now, I ask you,” continued the preacher, very solemnly, “where would be the popular teachings about hell if we calmly and deliberately erased from our English Bibles the three words, ‘Damnation,’ ‘hell,’ and ‘everlasting’? Yet I say unhesitat-

ingly—I say, claiming the fullest right to speak with the authority of knowledge—I say, with the calmest and most unflinching sense of responsibility—I say, standing here in the sight of God and of my Saviour, and, it may be, of the angels and the spirits of the dead—that not one of those words ought to stand any longer in our English Bibles; and that being, in our present acceptation of them, simply mistranslations, they most unquestionably will not stand in the revised version of the Bible if the revisers have understood their duty.”

There is little difference between such language and the utterances of the open infidel, which we may hear every day in our community. Listen to the following words, which are accepted by many as the teaching of a liberal religion :

“There are two classes of people arrayed against each other in principle and in belief; these are the radicals, or disbelievers, and the professors of revealed religion. The radical class say that the popular professed religion is a sham and a simulachre; a something that hangs in mid-air, to be talked of on Sunday; a hypocrisy; a hollowness. They say, How can better things be expected? Does not Christianity undermine the foundations of society? Look at its absurd doctrines of heaven and hell—an idea which appeals to the lowest form of selfishness inherent in man; to the confessional, whereby a priest becomes, by faith, a substitute for the Saviour in the forgiving of sins. The radicals ask, How is it possible that good results can flow from such a religion? The professors of religion say that the betrayers of trusts, the robbers and the evil men among their ranks, are exceptions, and that such evil-doers would persevere in their sinful ways and do the same as they now do under all circumstances. We see among the believers loyal husbands, tender wives, happy families, upright men, and good citizens. The truth is,” said the preacher, “that the defenders of both ideas have overstated their

cases. It is true that the sweetest results have accrued from Christianity ; nor is it fair to judge Christianity by its creeds, for, in the abstract, it will be defended during ages to come. Yet, how many professed Christians are there who really in their souls believe in the doctrine of eternal damnation ? How many in predestination ? How many put their trust in Christ as the means of what they call salvation through His mediation ? No, no ; these ideas have lost their hold on men's minds, and the modern man must live by the modern idea of light.

“The popular religion of Christianity never aimed at building up ; it is a mere mediatorial system to obtain, through belief, admission into the kingdom of God. What was the idea of Jesus ? That the kingdom of heaven was at hand. What idea had he of that kingdom—was it a higher or better condition of society than he knew ? No, it was the coming in of the new reign of Christ himself ; a something distinct from good laws. Jesus never thought of establishing a reign of brotherly love ; nothing was further from his ideas than to make this world what we think it ought to be. The condition which He put for entering into the kingdom of heaven was faith in Himself, not justice, truth, right, but faith in Him. Make yourself poorer ; make no effort to be richer than you are, for Christ says : ‘Blessed are the poor.’ This was the very herald-cry of John the Baptist taken up by Jesus. The Kingdom of God promised by Christ was to sit upon thrones and to wear crowns—through faith in him. The conditions for entering into that phantasmal kingdom are not those of manliness, or of love for liberty ; not a manly morality, but the contrary. The popular religion has never aimed at building up the world as it should be ; it never has done anything to regenerate society.”

The destruction of any religious tribunal in matters of faith, and the erection of the State into an authority for the conscience, have actually dethroned God on earth.

Children are no longer obedient to their parents, nor do parents realize the weight of their responsibility. The sacredness of marriage is destroyed where the state interferes to break the tie which death only can sunder. In human eyes marriage becomes only a kind of legal concubinage. There is not one Protestant sect which cares to defend the plain language of Holy Scripture on this point, while it is evident that the sanctity of the marriage bond lies at the foundation of Christian society. Divorce is only one step towards polygamy.

We close this part of our argument with the following words of Dr. Döllinger :

“The state of Christianity in America is an awful and serious warning. The want of a Church cannot be supplied by anything else. One of the worst consequences of this want is seen in the American school system, from which every kind of religious instruction is excluded. If sectarianism had brought on America no other curse than such a school system, which accustoms the youth of the country to regard life and knowledge on the one side, and religion on the other, as two completely separate and independent territories, such teaching must suffice to render it one of the greatest calamities of the New World. The bitter discovery is now being made in America that an education destitute of a Christian spirit is not merely defective. It is positively injurious, and trains up men to make them cold, calculating scoundrels.”

The whole existing condition of North America, in a religious point of view, is calculated to awaken great anxiety among all thinking men in the country. “The great majority of the rising generation is without any positive religion,” says the Protestant preacher Edson, “and I greatly fear that we are advancing by certain, and by no means slow, steps in the direction of complete absence of religion and moral ruin.”

In the whole daily press there prevails worthless



radicalism, and for some time past unveiled irreligion. The total want of a sentiment of veneration is a predominant feature of the national character. "The number of professing Christians is diminishing in all our sects," says a Baptist preacher; "and if the present decline continue, in the course of twenty or thirty years the candlestick will be removed from its place. The Church makes no proselytes, and has no influence upon the masses."

If you would have any further proof of the result of Protestantism, you have only day by day to read the journals, wherein you will find that Christianity itself is called to account; that our Lord's divinity is denied; that He is asserted to have failed; and that His religion is no longer able to produce any good upon the minds of men. You will read it Sunday after Sunday, as if the press were quickest to seize upon that infidelity which lies upon the surface and most attracts the notice of the day. You will find how prevalent therein among men is the renunciation even of Christ and actually of God Himself.

I can hardly close this lecture without reading to you one further quotation from Mr. Froude in regard to the morality which exists in Protestant countries:

"Thus Protestant countries are no longer able to boast of any special or remarkable moral standard; and the effect of the creed on the imagination is analogously impaired.

"But," he goes on, "Protestant nations have been guilty, as nations, of enormous crimes. Protestant individuals, who profess the soundest of creeds, seem, in their conduct, to have no creed at all, beyond a conviction that pleasure is pleasant, and that money will purchase it. Political corruption grows up; sharp practice in trade grows up—dishonest speculations, short weights and measures, and adulteration of food. The commercial and political Protestant world, on both sides of the At-

lantic, has accepted a code of action from which morality has been banished ; and the clergy have for the most part sat silent, and occupy themselves in carving and polishing into completeness their schemes of doctrinal salvation. They shrink from offending the wealthy members of their congregation.” (We believe we heard concordant testimony to this from distinguished members of the late Protestant Episcopalian Convention and Congress.) “They withdraw into the affairs of the other world, and leave the present world to the men of business and the devil.”

This language is fully as strong as anything I have used, and yet I suppose it is unexceptionable testimony with Protestants.

Now, dearly beloved brethren, thanking you for your kind attention, I close this brief course of Advent lectures, in which I have endeavored to present to you some of the most important truths affecting the time and our duties as men and as citizens. I confess that to me the world looks dark ; that the prospects of our country are not bright. I see few rays of hope in the outlook of the world, for I see no brightness except in the light of God. I see no promise of the perpetuity of our institutions except in the preservation of the truths of religion ; and I believe religion is the foundation of true government and real prosperity, and wherever religion is weakened, and men fall into sin, there will come political and social wrong. I pray God to avert the punishment due to our infidelities, and, so far as in me lies, I would lift my warning voice, in the strength of the faith which we believe, to mankind and to the nations. But there is no darkness without a hope ; there is no night so deep that there is not the promise of a dawn ; there is no grave so drear that there is not the hope of Resurrection. In the night when our blessed Lord was born “gross darkness covered the earth and thick darkness the people.” The Church of God, which subsists only by His undying life,

bears her Lord upon her heart and on her lips, and thus lives by His strength. She has only to point to the Word made flesh, the only hope of man, the only Redeemer of the nations. Dark indeed was the night when the Redeemer was born. "All things were in quiet silence," to use the language of Holy Scripture, "and the night was in the middle of its course when Thy almighty Word leaped down from heaven from Thy Royal throne."

In the stable of Bethlehem, to confound the rich and the great; in the rejection of the world and its dignities, to silence the voice of pride and false philosophy, God looked out upon this world of sin and sorrow, a Child in Mary's arms and yet King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In the darkness of that night there were those who were pure of heart to whom the first beams of the splendor of the Orient were made known, and to whose listening ears the song of the Angelic Host was heard: "Gloria in Altissimis Deo."

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."

The prophecy had vanished, the law had been broken, the light had gone out from the sacred Tabernacle, and the glory of the Cherubim had ceased, and yet in the very substance of our flesh appeared the God of God and Light of Light. We point, then, to the cradle of man's new birth, to the Author of all his hopes and all his aspirations. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved": for "unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace."









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