

THE FORCE OF PRINCIPLES.

A PRINCIPLE may be widely taken to signify "that from which anything proceeds." It may be in the ontological, logical or moral order, speculative or practical. The force of principles, like every other force, is measured by its effects. In his argument with Callicles, Socrates hesitates not to use "*σιδηρεῖς καὶ ἀδαμαντίνους λόγους*" (iron and adamant words or reasons) to express the force with which his conclusions were bound to his principles. He intimates that not all the adroitness of all the Sophists could remove the conclusions, so long as the principles were allowed to stand.

This is what takes place in every formal syllogism. If the premises are admitted, the conclusion necessarily follows. Hence the importance, in every instance, of making sure of the principles before attempting to reason from them, and the error of those who would limit the domain of logic to mere forms of deduction. For since the end of logic is to direct the mind to the attainment of truth, he that sets out from uncertain or doubtful principles, must not expect to reach certainty in his conclusions. There may possibly be a true conclusion from a false principle, but only at the sacrifice of consistency in the process; just as, by like inconsistency, a person, starting from true principles, may arrive at false conclusions. But, in this case, the conclusion is not derived from the principles or premises. For falsity cannot be derived from truth, nor truth from falsity. "There is no good tree that bringeth forth evil fruit, nor an evil tree that bringeth forth good fruit."

Criteriaology, or that part of logic which treats of the sources and foundations of certainty, is of paramount importance to all who value truth more than the search after it. A less quantity of certain knowledge is worth far more than a large amount of uncertain or doubtful knowledge, if, indeed, this can be called knowledge at all.

Two very common mistakes must be avoided: (1) That of reasoning closely from uncertain data or principles, and then claiming certainty for the conclusion; (2) That of taking certain acknowledged facts, and from them undertaking to prove the existence of a certain principle, on the ground that if the principle were established, the facts would follow.

This latter is the most specious, and withal the most insidious, form that sophistry is wont to assume. If the principle, A, were established, the facts, B, C, D, would follow, or be accounted for.

But these facts are established ; therefore, the principle is also established. If all the different species of animals and vegetables were derived by evolution from one original form, with a constant tendency to improve upward, there would be found a close connection between them, and a very obvious family likeness between any two contiguous species. But there is a wonderful linking together in the whole chain of being from mere earth to the highest form of life, the highest members of a lower species coming very close to the lowest members of the next higher species, in regular gradation throughout the whole scale of created being. The evolutionist takes these facts as evidence of the truth of his system, of the superfluousness of a Creator, and the natural development of all varieties of things. St. Thomas finds in them proof of the magnificence and grandeur of creation, and the consequent surpassing bounty and riches and power and glory of the Creator.

Even if evolution were proved possible, which it is not and can not be, since no man could live thousands of years, to make the experiment, still it would require positive proof that it had done what is claimed for it, before reason could accept it. And this, even if there were no positive proof, as there is, of a direct creation to account for the existence and variety of things, but only of the possibility of a creation. Under this hypothesis we could only say that evolution is possible, but this we cannot actually say.

Another instance. If the metal, A, enters into the composition of the sun, it will give forth the phenomenon, B, as a sign of its presence. But the phenomenon, B, does appear ; therefore, the metal, A, is one of the constituents of the sun. Here are two unwarranted assumptions : (1) That, from knowing the phenomenon produced by A, under experiment in our laboratory, we would know it also if A were acting naturally in the sun. For the conditions in the two cases may be very widely different—greater intensity of heat, etc.—which are past our finding out with any degree of accuracy at such an immense distance ; (2) Even if we did know that the said phenomenon could be produced by the said metal in the sun, we should first have to know that no other constitution of the sun could produce that metal, ere we could reasonably affirm that B was produced by A. And this we cannot know, without our knowing more than any savant has yet known of the nature and origin and action of light.

The force of principles is not confined to true principles. False ones are just as uncompromising. Both have only to be followed with logical exactness, and the result in one case will as surely be falsity as it will be truth in the other. When Kant laid down the false principle that our ideas are wholly subjective ; that they are *a priori* necessary forms of the mind, neither derived from nor rep-

representative of objective realities, he opened the door to all the vagaries of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. For, having taught that "space is an *a priori* intuition, found in us antecedently to all perception of external objects and as the formal quality of the mind, in virtue of which we are affected by objects, or as to the form of external sensation in general,"¹ he enabled Fichte to reason logically from his master's principles to the conclusion that there is nothing in space but *ego*, who furnished the *ideas* of what *seemed* to be there. For, if Kant was right in maintaining that we must needs have the idea of space, though there is no such objective reality, why may it, must it, not be that we are necessitated to have the ideas of all the objects we think are in space, though, in truth, there are no such objects there? There is only the *ego*; all else are creations of the *ego* by thinking them—baseless fabrics of mental vision.

Hegel could go a step farther, on the strength of the same principles laid down by his teachers. For, if all that exists is the *ego*, and the necessary mental forms (*ideas*) of the *ego* are in perpetual change, like cloud-shadows chasing one another over hill and dale, how can we predicate the existence even of the *ego*? There is nothing definite; all is in endless flux, in τὸ *fieri*, a *becoming*, a stretching out toward the absolute, and that, too, is *ideal*. Hegel transcends transcendentalism itself when he maintains that being and not being, entity and nonentity, are identical, thus doing away with the principle of contradiction. It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be at the same time.

Let us, however, give credit to whom credit is due, and award to Fichte and Hegel a heroic disregard of logical consistency, at the personal expense of remaining the ridicule of reasoning generations yet unborn. Kant stopped short in his deductions from his principles, when he turned to the practical or ethical side of life, and, to save an apparent consistency, he invented two reasons for man: one, theoretical; the other, practical, as though different faculties calculated the truth of a mathematical theorem and estimated the moral rectitude of an action! Contradictions are still the outcome of error, no matter how far the process is carried—contradiction with one's self or with the sound common sense of mankind.

Sir William Hamilton affords another instance of contradiction between a man's theorizing and his practice. For surely no one would think of charging him with not worshiping God, however far he was from the true religion; and yet strict adherence to his philosophic principles would preclude the possibility of such wor-

¹ See Ueberweg's *History of Philosophy*, vol. ii., p. 165.

ship. Teaching that the infinite, or unconditioned, as he preferred to call it, is unknowable, he taught that God is unknowable. But we cannot love what we cannot know, and we cannot worship what we cannot love. So that, to be consistent, he ought either to renounce his philosophy or abandon the worship of God.

This latter conclusion is just that which the more logical but atheistical Agnostics have reached, adding their own peculiar tenet (whence or how derived we will not stop to inquire), that this unknowable is a supreme force, an impersonal God. But an impersonal God is no God. Wanting intelligence, God would be less than the lowest of the human race, and to say that such a being could be a supreme anything is an insult to common sense, a mockery of reason. Supreme Force! Force cannot exist without something that has the force. This is atheism pure and simple, and it is unreasonable to look for wisdom or sound, consistent thought in an atheist.

Spinoza laid down for himself a false principle in his definition of substance, which he maintained is "that which is in itself and to be conceived by itself;" in other words it is that the concept of which does not require the concept of anything else. From this principle followed Pantheism, at once. Nor did Spinoza leave to his followers, as Kant and Sir William Hamilton did to theirs, to deduce in full measure the consequences virtually contained in his principle. They could hardly excel him in logical acumen or in courage to apply it to its utmost extent. His reasoning was straightforward with mathematical precision from falsity to falsity. His false definition could apply to only one substance, and that is God, the absolute and infinite Being. There is then no other substance than God. All the rest, all finite beings, all creatures, are but *modes* or *modifications* of the essential attributes of this one divine substance. God, as absolute cause of all being, is *natura naturans*. The two essential attributes of God are infinite extension and infinite thought.

But to speak of infinite extension is like speaking of an infinite finite. For extension belongs only to bodies. And no body can be infinite, since every body is made up of parts, and parts can be numbered, and no number can be infinite, for every number can be increased or diminished by unity.

But it is in religion especially that we see the force of principles. Luther laid down principles the full force of which are seen only in our own day. He was so given to contradictions that he spared not even himself. Inconsistency, one is tempted to exclaim, thy name is Luther! He maintained that "Holy Writ (the Bible) is the sole fountain-head, standard, and judge in matters of faith."¹

¹ "Credimus, confitemur, et docemus, unicam regulam et normam, ex qua omnia

He appealed to inerrable Scripture, and then put his own *private judgment* above the Scripture, admitting no other rule of its interpretation. He taught that each one's own private judgment in interpreting the Scripture is the rule of faith, and still continued to teach with authority, and that too after setting aside the authority established from the beginning of Christianity by the Founder of Christianity. *Faith alone*, he maintained, independently of good works, suffices for salvation; and because the Epistle of St. James contradicts this doctrine of Martin Luther, he called it "an epistle of straw." Woe to the passage of Scripture that does not harmonize with Luther's judgment! When it suited the exigency of his case he added to the Scripture with the same facility that he took from it.

But enough about the conflict of principles. Our object is to show their force. This is manifested by consistently following them to their logical conclusions. When Luther assigned to each one his own private judgment as the court of last appeal in interpreting the Scripture, and made Scripture the sole depository of the revealed word of God, he made all the *variations* set forth by Bossuet not only possible but perfectly legitimate. There was no need of King James's version, nor of the "Revised Edition." Each one had only to interpret the old edition with true Gospel liberty, keep as much as suited him, insert a word or two here and there to give the proper turn to what he chose to retain, and thus find light, and strength, and consolation in all his ways.

Luther himself was the first to demonstrate the force of his principle of *private judgment*, though he left it to his followers to show the ever-increasing intensity of that force. He says, speaking of the Pentateuch:

"We have no wish to see or hear Moses. Let us leave Moses to the Jews, to whom he was given as a *Mirror of Saxony*; he has nothing in common with Pagans and Christians, and we should take no notice of him. . . . Moses is the prince and exemplar of all executioners. In striking terror into the hearts of men, in inflicting torture, and in tyrannizing, he is without a rival."

If the principle of *private judgment* had thus at its birth force enough to throw Moses in the shade, we need not wonder at seeing it annihilate him in our own day and putting Darwin and Spencer in his place, substituting evolution for creation. Even Ingersoll is only a little more daring than Luther, in that he blasphemously attributes to the Creator the tyranny and cruelty attributed by Luther to His accredited representative.

dogmata, omnesque doctores judicare oporteat, nullam omnino aliam esse, quam prophetica, et Apostolica, tum veteris tum novi Testamenti Scripta."—*Solid. Declar.* p. 605.

Luther says of Ecclesiastes: "This book should be more complete; it is mutilated; it is like a cavalier riding without boots or spurs; just as I used to do while I was still a monk." He calls the Book of Judith "a tragedy;" Tobias "a comedy" containing "many amusing and silly stories." He thinks the author of Ecclesiasticus "is not a prophet, and knows simply nothing of Christ;" and in this style judges the Second Macchabees: "I have," says Luther, "so great an aversion to this book and that of Esther, that I almost wish they did not exist; they are full of observances which are characteristically Jewish and Pagan abominations." Of the Gospels he says "that of St. John is the only sympathetic, the only true Gospel." He declares that "the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Paul are superior to the first three Gospels." In the Epistle to the Hebrews he finds "bits of wood, hay, and straw," and in that of St. James "absolutely nothing to remind one of the style of the Gospel." He declares that "there are many things objectionable in this book" (the Apocalypse), that "every one may form his own judgment of this book; as for myself, I feel an aversion to it, and to me this is a sufficient reason for rejecting it." (See "Alzog's Church History," vol. iii., p. 39, Translation.)

Thus far ventured Luther's private judgment in Biblical exegesis. "Friends of Enlightenment" followed, and in the name of philology, historical criticism, and rationalism, demonstrated anew the force of this principle by carrying it to farther conclusions. David Strauss pronounced the historical narrative of the New Testament a collection of *myths*. In his "Christology" he coincides with Philo the Jew in representing Christ and the *Logos* as mankind. A party known as *Young Germany*, following their private judgment, adopted pantheism, rejected the spirituality of Christianity, and advocated the complete emancipation of the passions from all restraint. Another school of the disciples of Hegel, by reason of the same principle, asserted that "the office of the Protestant Church was to destroy faith in the Christianity of the Gospel; that Luther was the forerunner of Hegel, who was immeasurably the superior of the Great Reformer; and that Protestantism, discarding methods of moral discipline and in alliance with *science and culture*, could continue to exist without the Bible, which is, after all, only a bundle of grotesque errors of every sort, sometimes affecting the most vital questions, and should, therefore, be cast aside as antiquated and misleading."¹

Dr. Paulus's private judgment led him to explain away all miracles. All the known rules of hermeneutics were condensed

¹ See Alzog's *Church History*: Translation by Pabisch & Byrne; vol. iii., p. 974.

into Semler's "absolute freedom in the interpretation of Holy Scriptures." Ritter von Bunsen's private judgment had force enough to subordinate the "reinstated higher criticism," and his wealth of philological learning was equal to the herculean task of harmonizing Biblical facts with modern ideas. Ullman's private judgment went in for a *compromise* between the conflicting parties, schools, and sects; a heroic undertaking, indeed. But the private judgment of Schwarz broke down Ullman's exegetics completely, designating his system as "a dishonest super-rationalism," and its advocates eclectics, "destitute alike of ability and courage to form a new school," and, while accepting the general principle of miracles, still getting rid of them one by one in detail.

Neander's private judgment gave birth to his *Pectoral Theology* (*Pectus est quod theologum facit*), to a reply to Strauss, in which he professed to believe while he freely criticised, and to his *History of the Church*, in which supernatural facts are treated as so many anecdotes. Rothe's private judgment gave special prominence to the theory of "Unconscious Christianity." The private judgment of Baur found out that the books of the New Testament were only a part of the popular literature of the 1st and 2d centuries, and that "Christianity is a religion of purely human origin." Schenkel's private judgment "declared that the Protestant Church has no need of *priests*, that the *church of the people*, as at present constituted, recognizes no distinction between clergymen and laymen;" while the private judgment of the Ritualists asserts the distinction at least of splendid vestments and other outward adornments. Explaining the miracle at the wedding of Cana, Schenkel said that "Jesus, by the influence of his presence, changed the water of trivial and ordinary conversation *into the wine of elevated and glowing speech.*"

Private judgment went on with irresistible force till Claus Harms could say, "I could write on the nail of my thumb all the positive doctrines that are still believed." He invoked Luther's vengeance on those whose private judgment favored the *alliance* proposed by the *public* judgment of Prussia *between the Lutheran and Reformed Churches*. "Beware," said he, "of consummating this contract over the tomb where repose the bones of Luther. If you do, he may come to life again, and then woe to you." It appears, however that Luther did not reappear.

A new school was now issuing from private judgment, whose aim was stated to be "a return from Rationalism to primitive orthodox theology, a going out from the desert of liberal philosophy into the promised land of the Reformation."² The exodus had

¹ *Alzog*, vol. iii., p. 982.

² *Alzog*, "Universal Church History" (translation), vol. iii., p. 985.

hardly begun, however, when another private judgment, Pharaoh-like, started after them an opposition "orthodox" party, known as the *Neo-orthodox* school, which advocated, above and before all, a *State religion and a State theology*. They were rightly called Neo-Lutherans, for their private judgments were renewed with every new ruler. Hengstenberg took a leading part in this school, and branded as a true heretic every one whose private judgment differed from his own, thus disowning the fundamental principle of orthodox Protestantism. To complete the Prussian Evangelical Union, he taught that the "difference between the teachings of Luther and those of Calvin on the Lord's Supper are of no consequence; a confession of faith and theology is always sure to bring its own punishment. . . . What God has joined ought not to be put asunder."¹

Baumgarten's private judgment, in the name of a newer school, demanded that "*modern theology* should be subjected to fewer restraints, and that there should be a more unfettered application of the fundamental Protestant principle of *free inquiry*." Baumgarten had been a disciple of Hengstenberg, but had gone over to Hofmann, of whom Hengstenberg says: "This man, with a hardihood quite unusual among theologians, has dared to raise doubts concerning the authenticity, credibility, and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and to assail the Lutheran doctrine of the Trinity and the Last Supper. If one like him, who, smarting under disappointment, has gathered from the refuse of Rationalism what he fancied to be sound doctrine, can make converts *among us*, then is our cause certainly hopeless."²

This summary view of the workings of private judgment in the land of its birth, may serve to show the force of principles in general. We could point to like results, from the same principle, in Denmark, Sweden, Holland, and other countries, producing a Renan in France, a Colenzo in England; now a broad church, and then a narrow church; at one time anathematizing the Mass as damnable idolatry, again mimicking all its externals, and, from adopting a certain style of adornment, calling itself "Catholic." But we must look nearer home.

The most truly Protestant of all the private judgments, thus far delivered, is undoubtedly that given in the form of "A Protest against Dogma," by Amos K. Fiske, in the March number of the *Forum*. He is anxious about the temple of religious faith, thinks it "too valuable a thing to the human race to be allowed to get so out of plumb as to be in danger of collapse, and it behooves its guardians to find out whether it rests on rotting piles or on the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 987.

² *Ibid.*, p. 988.

eternal rock." This is sensible, especially in view of the divine promise, "Seek and you shall find," and the fact that the rock-built Church is luminous with four conspicuous and unmistakable marks—Unity, Catholicity, Sanctity, and Apostolicity.

Speaking of the danger to the Christian Church at the present day, "from the batteries of relentless questioning," Mr. Fiske says: "The assailants of the Church have contended that it rests upon creeds and dogmas as its sole foundation, and when these are battered down it must collapse"; he then asks: "But are not the real foundations deeper and more solid, and as enduring as the qualities and needs of humanity; and have not creeds and dogmas been the embankments and props accumulated for support in ages of imperfect knowledge and prevailing superstition? May not the modern revelations of science and reason show these to be unnecessary, and by clearing away the *débris* of a dark past, leave the fabric of a religion and a Church firmly resting on the original corner-stone, but with foundations broadened and solidified so as to be unassailable, and a superstructure in harmony with the intellectual progress of the race in these times?"

Here surely is a case to test the strength of private judgment. Sampson could shake the massive pillars to their fall, Milo of Crotona, they tell us, held up the roof when the tottering columns gave way, till Pythagoras and his disciples had time to escape; but now private judgment, more powerful than either, intends to uphold the "temple of religious faith" by removing its foundations,— "creeds and dogmas." The protester puts there something "deeper and more solid." What is this something? Private judgment, free opinion, of course. If creeds and dogmas are gone, there can be nothing else. This alone can be "as enduring as the qualities and needs of humanity." For is not one of these qualities freedom? And what is so free as private judgment—every man to think as he likes, and, of course, to speak and to act as he likes. What is so "unassailable?" If there is nothing left to assail but private judgment, it can be assailed by nothing else than private judgment; so that whichever side prevails, victory is sure to be on the side of private judgment. And what again is more "in harmony with the intellectual progress of the race in these times?" For is not private judgment wiser than divine revelation, more infallible than inspiration, more orthodox than the Apostles, more authoritative than all the Fathers, Doctors, Councils and Popes together? If private judgment is greater than all else, and "the race in these times" having emerged from "a dark past," is the greatest in advancement that has yet been, how can these two not be in the greatest harmony? This "Protest against Dogma" is therefore the greatest achievement yet made by Protestantism. Indeed, it

is impossible to surpass it. For there is nothing positive left to protest against. What remains is a blank negation. But a total negation is a total nothing, a nonentity. Therefore, there is nothing left of Protestantism by this protest. It is annihilated. It has completed the suicide long ago begun.

What is a church without dogma? There is nothing in it to teach, and consequently nothing to learn. With nothing to teach there can be no teachers; without teachers there can be no learners. A church without either teachers or learners, neither *docens* nor *discens*, is the newest, and therefore the most progressive thing yet devised; worthy of the "intellectual progress of the race in these times"; and worthy, too, of the principle to which it is due—private judgment. Every one in this church is perfect, for he cannot be taught, there being no dogma to teach him, and of course he has no need to be taught, and therefore is perfect.

What is a church without a creed? No one believes, for there is nothing to believe. If there is nothing to believe, there is no faith. Hence all must be seen, since "Faith is the evidence of things that appear not." If all is seen there is no hereafter, no heaven, no hell, no angel, no devil, no God. If there is only the present, then let the present be enjoyed. Let everybody think as he likes, speak as he likes, act as he likes. What *each one judges best is best*. Who grasps most of present enjoyments and present gratifications is wisest, happiest, best. Behold the *millennium* of private judgment!

Nor is this a vain conceit of the writer of "A Protest Against Dogma"; he seems to think that he has more than sufficient reason for anticipating its immediate advent. "Is it not a noticeable sign," he asks, "that intellectual and educated ministers have almost ceased to preach the doctrines of their theology?" And he subjoins the reason: "That is partly because they have ceased to believe them, and more, perhaps, because they know that intelligent and educated people in the pews do not believe them."

A curious question suggests itself here. Did unbelief in the pulpit produce unbelief in the pews, or did it work its way from pews to pulpit? Or did it originate simultaneously in both? The answer is left to each one's private judgment. Perhaps it is better to "judge not before the time." One thing seems certain, that the preaching of doctrines (dogmas) has ceased, because they are no longer believed either by preachers or hearers that are "intelligent and educated."

Here is another revelation. "We see ministers of the Gospel who cannot resist the influence of modern thought, retaining their places by steering clear of dogmatic avowals, and cherishing views which they dare not announce publicly." Heroic courage! "They

take the safe course of preaching a lofty morality and indulging in fine speculations upon human destiny." Consummate prudence! "But the incubus of creed is upon them and upon their congregations." How opportune this "Protest Against Dogma!" "Intelligent men compromise with conscience by acquiescing, for the sake of the good associations and good influences of the Church, in what they do not believe." How extremely conscientious they are! "Men of strong sense and good consciences admit that they adhere to the Church, not because they accept its dogmas, but for the sake of its good influences upon their families and society."

How can there be conscience, it may be asked, where there is no dogma? If private judgment is always right, and if it be true that "many men are of many minds," there can be no standard, and consequently no conscience. What is right to-day may be wrong to-morrow; nay, may be wrong to-day even. For A's private judgment may make something right, B's may make the same thing wrong, while C's may make it neither right nor wrong, but indifferent. Hence the same thing can be both right and wrong at once, and at the same time neither right nor wrong. This is the logical outcome of private judgment. Behold the *force of principle!*
Q. E. D.

"Does it not cultivate," asks Mr. Fiske, "an insidious hypocrisy in pulpit and pew, which is fatal to a genuine zeal for the elevation of mankind—the great work of any vital religion, and in particular the work to which the Christian Church professes to be dedicated?" Answer. It does. And the sooner Protestantism goes the full length of the "protest against dogma," and professes unbelief or infidelity, the more honest it will be and the more consistent with its principle of private judgment.

A further revelation from this "protester against dogma," is that "Satan and his angels, who were imported from the mythology of Persia, have been banished to the same limbo with Zeus and the lesser Olympian gods. As common sense, armed with the shafts of science and reason, dispels the mists of superstition (creeds and dogmas), the myths and marvels with which it was peopled by the imagination vanish forever." This means that when unbelief and private judgment have taken the place of "creeds and dogmas," the miracles and prophecies on which faith is founded will also disappear.

"Why should the theology of an enlightened age insist upon a belief in them?" Here we may ask: "Why should such impious disbelief be called theology? If there is no dogma, no creed, nothing to be believed, nothing to be taught, it ought to be called *atheology*, or *mythology*, or perhaps better still, *idiosyncrasology*. It was once said: "Do not believe the word of God, disobey Him,

and you shall be enlightened." Then it was: "Be enlightened, and you shall disobey, and shall cease to believe." Now it is (all in the present tense, *progressive* form): "We are enlightened, we are disobeying, disbelieving."

As a proof of this, take the following: "But it may be that Christian dogma in its prevailing forms owes little to the so-called revelations of the Hebrew Scriptures. It owes even less to the marvellous teacher of Nazareth." Mr. Fiske must mean by "prevailing forms" the more advanced of the various Protestant forms; and for anything we know to the contrary, the statement may be correct. But this only shows in a still stronger light the *force of principle*. For as private judgment began by denying the authority of the Vicar of Christ it must, if true to itself, end by denying Christ Himself. If Christ's word is unreliable in one instance, it must be so in every instance. If "He that heareth you heareth me," addressed to the Apostles and their successors, is worth nothing, no word of Christ is worth anything. But denying Christ is denying God; therefore, we have now to deal with *atheology*. If the supernatural is denied, Christ is denied. For Christ is essentially supernatural. His assuming human nature, the hypostatic union, His conception and birth of a Virgin, His curing the sick, raising the dead, are all miraculous, that is, above the power of all created natures. If everything that is miraculous is superstitious, and everything that is old incredible, then, indeed, is the era of atheism already here.

Christian dogma owing little or nothing to Christ? O absurdity! Why call it Christian, then? In the name of common sense, you contradict the common consent of mankind for the last nineteen centuries. And this consent is an evidence of truth, as Seneca says: *Apud nos veritatis argumentum est, aliquid omnibus videri.*" Call it at once by its right name, anti-Christian audacity.

"But the doctrine," we are told, "that what has been called the 'divine record' is inspired, is not of the substance of a genuine religious faith. Belief in the miraculous is by no means necessary to a devout state of mind." Good for private judgment! But if the "divine record" is not inspired, it is not the word of God, not divine, and the last Protestant contradicts the first. For Luther said that all of the divine record that did not contradict him was inspired. And each follower of Luther thus far has held that what his private judgment allowed to remain was certainly inspired. But now we have it from Mr. Fiske that none of it is inspired, or rather that it "is not of the substance of genuine religious faith" to hold that it is inspired. It is a mere accident then, at most. But no; for if religious faith can be genuine while resting on a human record (and it must be human, if not divine),

then would the accident that it was divine, coming to or affecting the genuine religious faith, destroy its substance or essence, by making it at once divine and human, which it cannot be. It is essential to genuine religious faith, therefore, that it rest not on a divine record. God must have nothing to do with it, even if He does exist, which existence private judgment has yet to accord Him.

Just think of it. Human reason to have a religion imposed upon it! one not of its own choosing! As though enlightened and educated men did not know how much and what to believe, or whether they should or should not believe at all? Are we going back to the *dark ages*? A "devout state of mind" has no need to believe in Christianity, for "belief in the miraculous" is by no means necessary to that state, and Christianity is built upon the miraculous. A devout state of mind can exist, then, without Christianity. But Christ says: "He that is not with me is against me." Therefore, an anti-Christian may be a devout man. But there is only one God, and Christ is God; therefore, an atheist may be a devout man.

But this is not all. Private judgment, instinct with progressiveness, becomes at length evolutionist. It says: "Is it not plain that religious development and adjustment have ever been the product of human need, and of human effort to supply that need? Like government and social relations, in which the spiritual instinct has worked its way toward the light?" How far-reaching this wonderful law of evolution is! But the principle of private judgment reaches still farther. It comprehends all things, and is itself comprehended by nothing. Intellectuality and morality being evolved from lower forms of life, and life in turn from inorganic elements, religion must of course come next by necessary development. From far down in mere matter the "spiritual instinct has worked its way toward the light," and, under the influence of necessary progress, has been steadily advancing from light to light, from lesser to greater, till to-day it stands revealed in all the effulgence of noonday brightness.

And now comes the last trumpet-blast to perfect reform. "Has not the time come when that branch of the Christian Church that derived its life from the right to think and to protest, should cast off the shackles of creed?" Certainly it has. No minimizing. Have the courage of your principle, private judgment; carry it to its legitimate conclusion. Separate Protestantism *toto celo* from the Church of Rome which "is built upon superstition and still finds support in it," that is, in dogma and creed.

Attention! reader. The following is not a quotation from Bossuet; it is the utterance of Mr. Fiske. "Their variety (doctrines

and creeds) and the changes they have undergone are evidence of error, not of truth. Truth is one, and as men approach it they draw together, not apart. The division of the Protestant Church into many sects is conclusive evidence that the inharmonious dogmas that have been wrought into the fabric of theological belief are not of the original and enduring substance of the teaching of Jesus. They are but variations of human error, determined by the state of knowledge and of thought in which they were conceived, by men seeking sincerely and devoutly for the truth."

Magna est veritas et prevalebit! But there are two ways to unity, one by all believing the same revealed truths, the other by all rejecting them. At which of these unities our Protester is aiming can be doubtful to none. He is a true Hegelian. For Hegel taught that to be and not to be, entity and nonentity, are identical, since both are absolutely indeterminate, and things that are equal to the same, are equal to each other. Thus this transcendent genius used one axiom to destroy another, that of Identity against that of Contradiction. But Mr. Fiske is equally clever. All who believe the same revealed truths are so far one, all who believe none of them are also one. But unity is the end to be reached, the *summum bonum*, and the easiest way to the end is the best, and the best means should be adopted. Unbelief is easier than belief; therefore unbelief must be adopted.

Now he waxes eloquent, touching off some rounded sentences with: "But through all this fabric of man-made theologies, strikes the light of scientific and critical research, of knowledge and reason, in these waning days of the nineteenth century; and behind the flaming torch of enlightened thought follows the plain daylight of common sense, dispersing the owls and bats of ancient superstition, the spectres and hobgoblins of a distorted faith."

We cannot look too closely at this, because of its excessive light. It either finds or makes bats and owls wherever it strikes. It is a flaming, two-edged sword. It is more effective than the *sistrum* of Isis. Here is a specimen of his exegetics: "'Believe in me and ye shall be saved' calls for no faith in doctrines of inspiration, of future rewards and punishment, of miraculous birth and death, of vicarious atonement, or in any of the other mystic dogmas that have been erected into an incongruous congeries of ecclesiastical systems."

This means that we are to believe in Jesus Christ, but not to believe His words: "Come ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"; for that kingdom is a future reward. Nor those other words of his: "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, which was pre-

pared for the devil and his angels"; for this is a future punishment. "Ye shall be saved" does not imply a future world then, but only has reference to this. But how or from what are believers in Jesus Christ to be saved here in this life? From death? No; all must die. From sickness, infirmity, disappointment, sorrow? No; these are some of the many ills which all flesh is heir to. Surely such a *saving* is not worth doing anything for, let alone believing in; nor with such a faith is "life worth living."

"What, then, is it (the world) to do?" asks Mr. Fiske. He answers: "The changing and revision of creeds is a perplexing task." *Credo*. "But there is no occasion for undertaking it." *Credo*. "The world does not want new creeds devised by fallible men to stem the tide of progress." *Credo*. Let them come into the old infallible Church. "Let the church of universal humanity, built up through the ages with the materials that each age afforded, open wide its doors to all who seek the true and the good, who wish to promote right conduct in themselves and others, and who desire to co-operate for the elevation and improvement of mankind, and let no test for membership be required except the ordinary evidences of good faith." Avaunt! deceiver, impostor, Private Judgment! There is no church of universal humanity, no church of any creature, but only the Church of the living God. "Who seek the true and the good!" There is no true, no good, without the supernatural, and this you have denied. "Promote right conduct in themselves and others!" There is no right conduct away from the eternal standard of all rectitude, the will of the Almighty, whose commands you set aside as a tablet of myths, a fiction. "Co-operate for the elevation and improvement of mankind!" There is no elevation for mankind without the Divine Elevator, who came down to us through His assumed humanity, that He might elevate us to assuming his Divinity. But this union of a divine and a human nature in the one Divine person of Jesus Christ you deny by denying the supernatural and the miraculous. You improve not mankind; you degrade them, you sink them below the level of the brute. Man was created for a supernatural end. If he tends to that end through the supernatural means of grace afforded him, he is far above the level of mere nature. If he refuses to accept the proffered means, he turns his back on his exalted destiny, and through his perversity sinks below the natural level of rational nature, even below the brutes. He is more cruel and vindictive than they, more vicious and depraved in proportion as he is more enlightened and intelligent, if he tends not to his end by virtue.

If one of two contradictory principles is false, the other must be true. Private judgment in matters of religion has been weighed

and found wanting, has scattered destruction all along its course. Authority, therefore, legitimate authority, is the only true and safe rule to guide us in religion. As there is no legitimate power but from God, so there is no authority that does not rest on Him. As He is the first principle of all things by creation, so is He the regulator of all things by His providence. His law is the rule for every free will that He has created. It belongs to the sovereign Lord to say how He is to be served, to the final end to determine the means to come to Him, to God to establish religion. He Himself came on earth to establish it, and built His Church up on the Rock to perpetuate it. He placed rulers over this spiritual kingdom, and one supreme head over all, His own vicar on earth. He gave them His own power, and to His vicar, infallibility. He made it obligatory on all to hear these rulers of His Church and to follow their guidance, saying: "If any man will not hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen and a publican." What more reasonable than to submit reason to Truth Itself, the Author of reason? If He makes use of parents in giving us immortal souls and our present life, may He not make use of men, spiritual fathers, in giving us the life of His life, His grace here and eternal happiness with Himself hereafter? If we believe a truthful man, why shall we not believe the Infinite Truth, Infinite Perfection? We have His word for it, that in believing what the Church teaches, we believe what He teaches; in obeying her, we obey Him: "He that heareth you heareth Me"; and "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

Behold the force of principle! The principle of authority in religion is strong by the strength of God, stronger than heaven and earth; for it rests on the words of the eternal Word, Who said: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away." It is stronger than any human power. In the minds and hearts of the early Christians it baffled the whole force of the Roman Empire, put forth in ten bloody persecutions. It triumphed over tortures and death itself thirteen million of times in the holy martyrs. It rendered delicate virgins and tender boyhood superior to the rage of tyrants and the mockeries, threats and wiles of the impious. It towered aloft in the genius of St. Augustine, and brought down his eagle mind to affirm: "I would not believe the Gospel, but for the authority of the Catholic Church." It sounded the depths of philosophy in the Angelic Doctor, and gathered treasures of knowledge from every field of scientific research down through the ages. Those who followed this principle could say: "Credidi, propter quod locutus sum!" In matters of religion, in the supernatural, they held that they should believe in order to know, not know in order to believe. St. Thomas could say to

apparent science: "Science, you are false; for you contradict what is absolutely true, the revealed word of God as interpreted by the infallible Church of God, and no two truths can contradict each other, since truth is that which is, and if it is it is, and cannot not be. I must therefore search for the natural truth of science in another direction. Now I have found what I sought! This contradicts no known truth, and besides approves itself perfectly to reason."

How much unnecessary and fruitless labor is spared to that great intellect by constantly following the principle of authority! Only he who has tried to read understandingly the works of St. Thomas can appreciate the force of his guiding principle, which enabled him to accomplish such prodigies within the very moderate span of life allotted him, forty-eight years.



THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

IN the October number of the *QUARTERLY* a brief sketch was given of the recent persecutions of the Uniat Greek Catholics of Lithuania. It is now proposed to say a few words respecting the condition of the Latin Catholics in the Russian dominions, who are still officially recognized as Catholics. They form a large body, numbering from eight to nine millions, and including the most highly civilized portion of the subjects of the empire. Nominally they are guaranteed the free exercise of their religion, but in practice the rule to which they are subject is very much like the English penal code of the last century in Ireland. The government removes their bishops and priests at its will, and in the same manner forbids the appointment of successors to vacancies among the clergy. It closes churches, suppresses convents, and even in certain cases forbids the administration of the sacraments without police permission. The comparative isolation of Russia from the other nations of the civilized world keeps the condition of its Catholic subjects almost unknown abroad. What the toleration really is which Russian absolutism grants to the Catholic Church we shall endeavor to convey to our readers.

The great bulk of the Catholic population in Russia is Polish,