

## INDIFFERENTISM.

"There is a master of scoffing that in his catalogue of books of a feigned library sets down this title of a book, *The Morris-Dance of Hereticks*. For indeed every sect of them hath a diverse posture or cringe which cannot but move derision in worldlings and depraved politickes."—BACON, *Essay on Unity of Religion*.

PROTESTANT England was once on fire with the spirit of religion. It was a spirit of bigotry, yet zealous and earnest. It was a spirit of persecution, yet founded on deep, though false, conviction. It was a spirit that brooked no opposition, domineering and intolerant; that upturned the altars at which long generations had worshipped; that tore down the figure of Christ the Crucified and trampled it under foot; that broke in pieces the images of saints in painted glass and graven metal and carved stone; that drove into exile or racked and tortured unto death priests and people of the ancient faith.

Protestant England was no doubt deeply in error, but it was also beyond all mistake deeply in earnest. The error remains, but the earnestness, where is it? It has long since departed. That fiery fanaticism is now burnt out, and what is there but empty niche and desecrated tomb and pillaged shrine amid ruins of chapel and abbey and cathedral to remind us that it once blazed so fiercely? Quenched indeed is that ardent spirit of Puritanism, but from the dead embers there has sprung up a new spirit; a spirit of live and let live; a spirit of tolerance; a spirit of indifference; a spirit that is tolerant precisely because it is indifferent. From these dead ashes of profound Puritanism there has started into life a new spirit of shallow philosophism that is filling men's hearts, not with deeper respect for religion, but with a complacent patronage of Almighty God.<sup>1</sup> Persecuting Protestantism maintained that worship of God

<sup>1</sup> Compare the following eloquent passage from Ruskin:

"The form which the infidelity of England, especially, has taken, is one hitherto unheard of in human history. No nation ever before declared boldly, by print and word of mouth, that its religion was good for show, but 'would not work.' Over and over again it has happened that nations have denied their gods, but they denied them bravely. The Greeks in their decline jested at their religion, and frittered it away in flatteries and fine arts; the French refused theirs fiercely, tore down their altars and broke their carven images. The question about God with both these nations was still, even in their decline, fairly put, though falsely answered. 'Either there is or there is not a Supreme Ruler; we consider of it, declare there is not, and proceed accordingly.' But we English have put the matter in an entirely new light: 'There is a Supreme Ruler, no question of it, only He cannot rule. His orders won't work. He will be quite satisfied by euphonious and respectful repetition of them. Execution

should take but one form, the form of psalm-singing, image-breaking Puritanism ; and it strove to force the consciences of its opponents by the rack, and the thumbscrew, and the block, and the gibbet. Nowadays, however, the pulse of Protestantism throbs no longer with this fiery excitement of Puritanical zeal. Its pulse has grown sluggish with the torpor of indifferentism. The cold has reached its heart. Protestantism, as that creed at its birth was understood, is well-nigh dead ; dead and buried, it might be said, were it not for a sprinkling of honest folk in out-of-the-way places who cling to old-fashioned prejudices and lag far in rear of the logical and intellectual developments of their age. It is a matter which Catholics may be thankful for that Protestantism is very tolerant now. It persecutes no more. It no longer puts pressure on any man's conscience. And why not? Because it holds that one religion is just as good as another. It is, as we say, indifferentist.

Now, indifferentism is not the same thing as atheism, though it leads to it, as will presently be shown. Nay, modern enlightenment in the present stage of its development is not only willing to allow that God exists ; it will even grant that He should be adored, with, however, this important qualification, that whether the divine worship is to take this form or that is a matter solely for the worshipper himself to decide. Advanced thinking treats God as a distant acquaintance towards whom a faint show of civility is enough. It considers that God ought to be, and indeed must be, very well satisfied to be adored at all, without imposing on the worshipper the particular form of religion in which that adoration shall be clothed. That jack-o-lantern called the *zeitgeist*, or spirit of the age, holds definite and dogmatic teaching to be antiquated and out of date ; a mere fossil, a piece of ancient history, the relic of a dead past, the shreds and tatters of a worn-out mediævalism, the last rusty link of the chains of a slavish age, a remnant of the barbarism of the Dark Ages impotently struggling for existence in the intellectual refulgence of our enlightened epoch.

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would be too dangerous under existing circumstances, which He certainly never contemplated.'

"I had no conception of the absolute darkness which has covered the human mind in this respect, until I began to come into collision with persons engaged in the study of economical and political questions. The entire *naïveté* and undisturbed imbecility with which I found them declare that the laws of the devil were the only practicable ones, and that the laws of God were merely a form of poetical language, passed all I had ever before read of moral infidelity. I knew the fool had often said in his heart there was *no* God ; but to hear himself say clearly out with his lips, 'There is a foolish God,' was something which my art studies had not prepared me for. The French had indeed, for a considerable time, hinted much of the meaning in the delicate and compassionate blasphemy of their phrase '*le bon Dieu*,' but had never ventured to put it into more precise terms,"—*Modern Painters*, v., p. ix., c. 12.

Consequently, the English nation is now opposed to set formularies and dogmatic decrees and well-defined doctrines of faith. For if any one religion is as good as any other, it is but common sense to choose that creed which trammels a man least. Why be a Catholic with the obligations to attend Mass every Sunday, to abstain, to fast, to confess sins to a priest, if it is as easy to travel to heaven without these burdens as with them? Current thought looks on religion as a question of æsthetics; a matter of feeling or of taste or of sentiment. Englishmen assert their liberty to choose their creed as they choose their clothes, and claim the right to change their faith just as freely as they change their fashions. They demand leave for a man to form his views in religion as he forms them in painting or in poetry or in architecture; to form them, that is, without let or hindrance from man or God according to the individual's taste and fancy and character and inclination; and whatever view the individual thinks fit to adopt, with that Almighty God must be satisfied. And thus the modern tolerantist makes broad his phylacteries and enlarges the borders of his garments and gives thanks that he is not wedded to a fixed creed, a believer in dogma, an infallibilist, priest-ridden, narrow-minded, even as is the Catholic. This is the large and liberal religion of the day—a comprehensive cult which encourages you to hold any view and to entertain any opinion provided only you do not condemn the opposite of that view or the contradictory of that opinion. Do not be so intolerant as to think your neighbor in the wrong because he holds your coal-black to be snow-white. For this is to be broad-minded. This is to be indifferentist.<sup>1</sup>

The spirit of the age is a spirit of lawless liberalism in religion. The fashionable principle is this: Be respectable in your outward life; sin not against the easy code of social morality, or at least do not flaunt your sin in the public eye; do not shock your neighbor's sense of propriety and decorum; and then it matters little or nothing what your faith may be. The popular theory amounts to this, that if a man is upright in his dealings; if he is known for a faithful husband, a good father, a just master, a loyal citizen, it is unimportant to what creed he holds. Be he Catholic or Baptist, or Quaker, or Unitarian, call himself by the name of any one of the myriad sects that spring up, mushroom-like, around us, his salvation is in every case secure because all these religions are equally pleasing to God; each is a fair and flowery path leading straight and comfortably and pleasantly to heaven.

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<sup>1</sup> Indifferentism, or, as it is sometimes called, latitudinarianism, or tolerantism, is used in a variety of senses. Civil and political indifferentism is that which tolerates different religions in the same state. Religious and theological, which teaches that all religions are equally conducive to salvation.

Now, strange as this theory seems to us Catholics, with our religion sharply defined, clear cut, unchanged and unchangeable, it is nevertheless a quite logical deduction; it is the only issue and outcome of Protestantism. Protestantism leads straight into indifferentism, and, in the end, it leads to rationalism,<sup>1</sup> on the road to which indifferentism is but the half way house.<sup>2</sup> It may be convenient to point out that by the term "Protestant" is here meant that generic religion which comprises not only the four great branches of specific Protestantism—Lutheran, Arminian, Calvinist, and Socinian—but also all those other sects or offshoots which Anglicans sum up under the general name "Dissent."<sup>3</sup> By "Protestantism" we mean that negation of Catholicity which began its career by revolt against the infallible guidance and authority of the Church Catholic, which taught that there was but one objective rule of faith, the Scriptures, to be interpreted by the private judgment of the individual according to the light of his own unaided reason.<sup>4</sup> Of that religion private judgment is the keystone, and because such is the case, indifferentism first and rationalism afterwards must, both in theory and in practice, flow from it. This is the contention admirably developed by De Lamennais in his profound and eloquent, though, in parts, mistaken, "*Essai sur l'Indifférence*."<sup>5</sup> This, too, is the contention which Father Perrone worked out in his "*Prelectiones Theologicæ*,"<sup>6</sup> where he shows that Protestantism, in its *critical* capacity, by tampering with the canon of Scripture; in its *exegetical* capacity by interpreting Scripture according to the ever-changing light of private judgment; and in its *dogmatical* capacity by the introduction of those heretical tenets which follow from its first principles could only lead *de jure* and has led *de facto* into the grossest rationalism.

<sup>1</sup> The Protestant writer, Amand Saintes, in his *Histoire critique du rationalisme en Allemagne*, p. 7, writes: "Quoq qu'il soit vrai de dire. que les principes du rationalisme se confondent avec ceux du Protestantisme ou, du moins, qu'ils en découlent, et que l'établissement de la réformation devart amener inévitablement le rationalisme," etc.

<sup>2</sup> Leo XII., Encyc. *Ubi primum*, said: "Indifferentism not only boldly maintains that all the sects are on the right road (*recte ambulare*), but also those societies which profess pure deism and even pure materialism.

<sup>3</sup> The name "Dissent" is not very expressive. The offshoots of Anglicanism, etc., "dissent" from what? Not from that against which the mother-heresy "protested," viz., Catholicity; since the children are more bitter than the mother against the Catholic Church.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation*, part i., c. 6, n. 56. "By the religion of Protestants I understand . . . that wherein they all agree and which they all subscribe with a greater harmony as a perfect rule of their faith and actions, that is the BIBLE. The BIBLE, I say, and the BIBLE only, is the religion of Protestants."

<sup>5</sup> Vol. i., cc. 6 and 7.

<sup>6</sup> Tom. Post., *De Locis Theologicis*, col. 1414.

Protestantism is the parent of indifferentism. For without an infallible rule of faith there is no one to settle dogmatic controversies, there is no standard by which to decide that one form of belief is better or worse than another. It is worth while to emphasize the fact that indifferentism springs from Protestantism, as the oak from the acorn, and the bird from the egg. For all current controversy really hinges on the question of infallibility; and in demonstrating the existence of infallibility it is often useful to use the negative as well as the positive form of argument; that is, not only to prove that the Church of Christ is infallible, but also to prove that without infallibility there cannot be a Church of Christ. Infallibility is the great bulwark against indifferentism. Now Protestantism possesses no infallible voice, for infallibility implies an external authority and the Protestant principle of private judgment denies, in theory, all external authority. We say "in theory," because in practice the rank and file of Protestants adopt, and of necessity adopt, since they have not the means to judge for themselves, the particular views entertained at the moment by the minister under whom they happen to sit. Their pope is their parson.<sup>1</sup> But in theory the upholders of private judgment maintain that for authority to determine for the individual what to believe is simply tyranny. The duty, let it be said in passing, of one who is searching for the true religion is to use his private judgment to discover, not the body of doctrine which he must believe, for that is beyond his power, but the authority which will teach him what these doctrines are. This principle of private judgment, we have been assured by Prof. Blackie,<sup>2</sup> has saved the world from "the despotic and soul-stupefying sacerdotalism of the Romanists." In "protesting" against the authority of the Catholic Church, the reformers denied, and meant to deny, all external authority whatever in matters of faith. The chief indictment which Protestantism is ever urging against the Church is this: that she arrogantly claims an authority which Christ never instituted—the authority to decide in questions of faith.

External authority, therefore, and private judgment are contradictory terms; they are mutually exclusive. The very *raison d'être* of Protestantism is its denial of external authority. Prove that there exists an external authority in matters religious, and thereby you prove the falsity of Protestantism.

Yet without external authority there cannot be, in the present order of God's providence, any objective and trustworthy rule of faith; and without such a rule there can be no stability; there can be nothing to stamp one religion as better than another; there can

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "Edm. Burke's Letter to His Son," *Orthodox Journal*, vol. iv., n. 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Natural History of Atheism*, p. 184.

be nothing to save the world from indifferentism. For if in the voyage of life, beset with shoals and quicksands, the mariner has to sail over unknown seas in the dark, "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine,"<sup>1</sup> without pilot, without chart, without buoys to mark the banks and channels, what wonder if he comes to regard one course as good as another, and to look on it as immaterial how he sets his rudder?

The Bible alone can never be an infallible rule of faith. For infallibility is a gift of God, and God never meant the Bible, apart from an authority external to the Bible, to be any man's guide in religious matters. Had it been so intended, the Bible would have been penned by Christ, and would have existed from the beginning of His Church. Yet for nearly a hundred years Christianity subsisted without the Bible such as we have it; and necessarily so, since the revelation contained in the Bible, according to the Bible itself, was in large measure made in the first instance orally, and was orally published long before it was committed to writing. For nearly a century, therefore, was the Christian Church with or without a rule of faith? Not without, as any Protestant will allow. Then, with a rule of faith that was not the Bible. This primitive rule of faith, then, must have been an authority prior in time, extrinsic to, the Bible. Does that authority yet exist? If not, how and when did it perish, and what is the proof that the earliest rule of faith instituted by Christ was supplanted by another?

Moreover, that authentic collection of inspired books we call "the Bible" could not exist as a collection unless there had previously existed an authority to put the collection together, and to vouch for the inspiration of everything contained in it. Once again, therefore, if there is to be a Bible at all, it is necessary to recognize an authority extrinsic to the Bible. For the Bible itself cannot testify to its own canon. The Bible, no doubt, faithfully records divine revelation. But it is only a record. It cannot guarantee the inspiration of each and all the separate books it comprises. A record is not evidence unless it is authenticated. And it cannot authenticate itself. Until, therefore, it has been proved what the authenticity and genuineness of the record is, its testimony has no *locus standi*, it cannot come into court. The word of a witness, whether book or human being, cannot be accepted as veracious testimony of that witness's veracity. What authority, therefore, extrinsic to the Bible, will a Protestant adduce to prove the certain inspiration of the Bible? This difficulty has embarrassed opponents a good deal, but they have found a loophole of escape. The French Protestant theologians, Claude and Jurieu,

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<sup>1</sup> Ephes. 4, 14.

after much casting about, discovered that Protestants *feel* the truth of the canon, etc., of Scripture. They know truth, as Jack Falstaff knew the true prince, by instinct. "Ou sent les verités fondamentales comme ou sent la lumière quand on la voit; la chaleur quand ou est auprès du feu; le doux et l'amer quand on mange."<sup>1</sup> An original and convenient doctrine. Protestants *taste* the truth of the Bible. But this Protestant acuteness of palate does not cut away the whole difficulty. For "tastes differ," which perhaps accounts for the fact that, for example, Anglicans taste the truth of the divinity of Christ, while Unitarians do not taste it. Nay, some palates are so vitiated as not to taste Biblical truth at all. Such is the palate atheistical. What, then, is to be the authority for inspiration of Scripture? Not the "Higher Criticism," which can at most only claim to show what of Scripture is *not* inspired. Not tradition, which Protestantism maintains to have erred on many vital questions. Not the Fathers, since they establish, not the intrinsic truth of the tradition, but only what in their day the tradition was. It only remains, then, for a Protestant to fall back on his private judgment and settle his own canon of Scripture.

Consequently, the canonical Scriptures are not a rule of faith for the individual, but the individual is the rule of the canonical Scriptures. From which two obvious conclusions are deduced. First, that as the individual is subject to error, so the Protestant canon has no valid claim to be free from error. Hence the rule of faith that is to preserve from error is itself, *ex hypothesi*, probably erroneous. Secondly, that as no two Protestants, if left to their own private judgment, will agree on the same canon,<sup>2</sup> so no two Protestants will have the same rule of faith. Private judgment, therefore, is a principle, not of unity, but of discord; a centrifugal, not a centripetal, force. And as one man's private judgment is to him as good as another's, so the religion devised by the one is as good as the religion devised by another.

<sup>1</sup> *Le Vrai Système*, cited by Lamennais, *Essai*, p. 239. Truth has been defined as what a man *traveth*; but it should apparently be what a man *feeleth*!

<sup>2</sup> "Truth means that which one *traveth*, i.e., thinketh or firmly believeth,"—*Diversions of Purley*, part ii., p. 404. This is a true etymology, and accurately explains *subjective* truth. Horne Tooke is, however, talking nonsense when he says: "There is no such thing as eternal, immutable, everlasting truth. Two persons may contradict each other and yet both speak truth; for the truth of one person may be opposite to the truth of another."—P. 404. He here confounds objective with subjective truth.

<sup>4</sup> Luther rejected the Epistle of St. James because it contradicted his doctrine of "justification by faith alone." The Anglicans retain it. Strauss questioned the authenticity of the four Gospels. Schleiermacher rejected from the canon the Epistles to Timothy. If Protestants are unanimous in rejecting several of the Deuterocanonical books, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Machabees I. and II., etc., it is only a negative unanimity arising from the fact that the great bulk of the people know nothing of these books or parts of books.

Protestantism, consequently, if it is to have a fixed, stable and certain canon, must fall back on the authority of the Church. It sets up the Bible against infallibility, and yet it can have no Bible until it has recognized infallibility. It is Protestant because it "protests" against infallibility, and yet, on Protestant principles, it cannot so protest without ceasing to be Protestant. It is the position of the wood-cutter who sits on the branch he is sawing away from the trunk.

It is plain, therefore, that the Protestant so far must make two concessions: first, he must admit, that in the first century of the Church there existed—even if it has since perished, of which there is no jot or tittle of evidence—an infallible authority external to the Bible; secondly, that without such external authority there would be no Bible. However, for argument's sake, let us overlook these initial difficulties and suppose that in some mysterious way the Protestant churches—"pillars and ground of the truth"—have been presented, say by some archangelic hand, with an authentic canon of Scripture ready-made. Even then the outlook is by no means clear. For there remains the question of the integrity of revelation. Are Protestants in possession of the *whole* of revelation? Given the canon, the Bible is no doubt a revealed record of whatever it contains; but it is nothing more. It testifies that it contains revelation, but not that it contains *all* revelation. Well, it will be said, may not this integrity be assumed? By no means. For revelation was originally, in the New Testament, given for the most part orally to begin with, and on what ground are we to base the assumption that inspiration was made coextensive with revelation, that the written word covers all the ground occupied by the revealed word? The only infallible authority for Protestants, or Protestant principles, is the Bible; and inasmuch as the Bible nowhere asserts that it contains all revelation, still it contains enough for salvation. A curious answer, truly, and yet the only answer a Protestant can make! But how is this astounding assertion to be proved? By the Bible or by an authority extrinsic to the Bible? Not certainly by the Bible, which nowhere makes any such statement. Then by an authority external to the Bible; an authority to which the Protestant is once again, by stress of argument, driven to appeal. To prove, therefore, that he has revelation enough for salvation, the Protestant must appeal to that authority, to recognize which is to cease to be Protestant!

The Bible, the sole rule of faith, though it *may* not contain all revelation, still does contain all that is necessary for salvation! An admirable subterfuge, certainly. For it can hardly be denied that whatever God revealed, He revealed for our belief. Christ said with remarkable clearness to His apostles and their succes-

sors: "Going, teach all nations . . . teaching them to observe *all* things whatsoever I have commanded." *All*, and "he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mt., 28 : 19, Mk., 16 : 17). As De Lamennais wrote<sup>1</sup>: "Mais voici une chose étrange : Dieu révélera aux hommes des vérités nécessaires à l'homme, et les hommes ne seront pas obligés de croire Dieu, et ils resteront maîtres de rejeter les vérités que Dieu leur révèle ! Mais, à quoi bon une révélation ? Mieux valait que Dieu gardât le silence !" In one word, the subterfuge is an insult to Almighty God.

Moreover, not only does the Bible *not* contain all revelation, and not only does the Bible *not* contain all that is necessary for salvation, but Protestants themselves, in the most practical and emphatic manner, recognize and proclaim that it does not. The private judgment of the individual measures his rule of faith and is compelled to find it wanting. He falls back on tradition. He is compelled to fall back on it. He has no choice but to go beyond and behind the Bible. The Anglican believes, against the Baptist, that infants must not be denied baptism. On what authority does he believe this? Of tradition alone. The Baptist believes, against the Quaker, that swearing under certain circumstances is lawful, though the Bible bids him "swear not at all."<sup>2</sup> What is his authority for the toleration of this practice? Tradition alone. And, to specify one more out of many instances, the sects observe the Sabbath on the first instead of the last day of the week with no authority but tradition for this serious deviation from Scriptural injunction and practice. The Protestant rule of faith, then, is not the Bible alone, but the Bible eked out by tradition. And who vouches for the truth of tradition? The Protestant must again doff his Protestantism and answer—the Church.

However, again for purposes of argument, let us make another concession to Protestantism. We supposed above a Protestant to have had the canon, in some mysterious way, settled for him, to have had it determined for him, in some manner we cannot understand, what are and what are not the inspired books which go to make up that miniature library we call "the Bible." Let us now go on to imagine that the Bible without tradition contains all that is necessary for salvation. These are large concessions to make, yet they do not advance the opponent far on his road to clearness. He remains sunk to the lips in a slough of difficulties. His rule of faith still fails him. For to have faith through the Bible alone, not only must he believe that the Scriptures are the Word, the whole Word, and nothing but the Word of God, but he must also believe, *without doubting*, all that the Scriptures contain. With infallible

<sup>1</sup> *Essai*, vol. i., c. vii..

<sup>2</sup> Mt. 5, xxxiv.

certainly not only must he believe that the Bible is an authentic record of inspiration, but also he must receive *with the highest certainty* each and all of the revealed truths contained in the Bible. Not his notions about these truths, but the truths themselves in their genuine sense he must hold to and firmly believe. This is a point that cannot be too strongly insisted on, namely, that the material object of faith—the *things* to be believed, as distinct from the *motive* for believing them—are the truths themselves, and not any one's crude and unauthorized notions of those truths. Divine faith is to believe without doubting whatever God has revealed. It is not, objectively considered, one thing for one man and another thing for another man; not one thing for one man to-day and another thing for the same man to-morrow. The truths of revelation are permanent, fixed, unalterable; the same yesterday, to-day and forever. These difficult truths, therefore, the private judgment of the Protestant must grasp in their genuine sense; and he must be infallibly certain that he has so grasped them. If he is not certain, then he has room for doubt; and where there is doubt there is no faith which by definition is "belief without doubt." Now, will any man in calm possession of his senses maintain that the private judgment of the individual can, unaided by authority, seize the genuine sense of a book such as is the Bible, written originally in foreign idioms by a variety of hands in a variety of styles, the subject-matter of which is, in parts, the most abstruse with which the human mind has to cope; a book that bristles with difficulties, as the students of the "higher criticism" are earnest to proclaim? And even if an individual, gifted with overweening confidence in his own ability, should hold that it had been given to him to master the full and genuine sense of all revelation, would he further assert that his interpretation of that sense was infallibly certain with intellectual certainty? For it is not enough to *feel* certain. Feeling is not faith. Faith is fixed, feeling is transient. A man may to-day feel certain that he is the king of spades, and yet to-morrow sink his claim to royal honors. In like manner the man who one month *feels* certain of Anglicanism may the next month be professing Methodism, and the month after be preaching Quakerism, without the object of these various subjective faiths being at all the objective truths revealed by God.

Let us emphasize this dogmatic truth that the certainty of faith is an intellectual and objective certainty. It implies a firm persuasion of the intellect grasping without doubt or fear of the opposite, and with the strongest positive adhesion, that which is objectively true, with a certainty that will enable a man to stand, in the intellectual order not like an aspen quivering in the breezes but steadfast as a tower four-square to all the blasts of heaven. For

faith, as we have said, is to believe without doubting all that God has revealed, because God is the very truth that can neither deceive nor be deceived. As, then, we are bidden to believe every iota of God's revelation under pain of eternal loss, it is obvious that God must have made that revelation easily and infallibly ascertainable in its full, clear and genuine sense by the due exercise of our natural faculties as thinking beings. By what process, then, is that full, clear and genuine sense to be for certain discovered and grasped? Only through the medium of a divinely commissioned teacher teaching under supernatural guidance—in one word, only through the infallible voice of the Catholic Church. But to that voice the Protestant turns a deaf ear. How, then, can he master with certainty the full, clear and genuine sense of Scripture? By the Bible or by the authority extrinsic to the Bible? Not by the Bible, since no book can assure its reader with infallible certainty that his interpretation of that book is infallibly certain. Besides, the Scriptures nowhere give any such assurance. On the contrary, St. Peter<sup>1</sup> points out very clearly that there are certain things in the Epistles of St. Paul "hard to be understood which the unlearned and the unstable wrest, *as they do also the other Scriptures*, to their own destruction." Once again, therefore, if the Protestant is to have the certainty of faith, he must go beyond the Bible. His rule of faith has again failed him. He must appeal to authority. Is that authority fallible or infallible? If fallible, it cannot impart certainty since it has it not. Therefore, infallible. There is no trustworthy rule of faith unless infallible.

In concluding this part of the subject—that Protestantism *theoretically* leads to indifferentism, to Deism, and to atheism—we may be allowed to compress the above arguments into a nutshell. It is the fundamental principle of Protestantism that there is no rule in religion except that of Scripture interpreted by reason. Reason, then, is above revelation. It follows, in primary sequence, from this that if Scripture is to bind it must be *clear*; otherwise private judgment would believe without knowing what it believed and without knowing what the Scriptures meant it to believe. Moreover, that would be to put Scripture above reason, which, ex hypothesi, is absurd. From this it follows in secondary sequence that where Scripture appears to teach doctrines above, though not contrary to, reason—as the Trinity, the Incarnation and, in a word, all Mysteries—reason must either reject that part of Scripture or must interpret it so that mysteries cease to be mysterious. In which case the authority of Scripture is obviously nothing more than the authority of reason itself; and as human reason varies in

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<sup>1</sup> II., 3, 16.

various persons, so the interpretation of Scripture will vary in various persons. Thus the religion of Christ would not be one but many. And that is indifferentism. Again, as reason is above revelation, it may accept or reject revelation. And that is Deism, which soon passes into atheism.

And not theoretically only but *practically* also—as experience makes painfully evident—is it impossible for a Protestant to grasp with certainty the genuine sense of that Book which he is never tired of proclaiming to be his one rule of faith. The Protestant heresy has had three centuries to prove to the world what principle of stability it possesses and it has shown itself unstable as quicksilver, changeful as the moon, restless as the sea, ebbing and flowing, chopping and changing, ever in a flux. That heresy started life, as Bossuet in his “Variations”<sup>1</sup> proved, by internal wranglings and disputings, by asserting and denying and modifying and explaining away. And as it began so it has continued, until the sects sprung from it have so multiplied that subtle ingenuity is required to coin for them names which shall not excite a smile. It has shown itself to be not a creed, but an amalgam of creeds, without consistency, without cohesion, with no principle of unity, with no connecting bond except that negative bond of bitter hostility to the Catholic Church. Not to mention the ephemeral sects that have been born, have flourished, have died and disappeared, who that tells over the names of that endless progeny of Protestantism chronicled by Whittaker, under the heading of “religious denominations,” will maintain that Protestantism has grasped with certainty the full and genuine sense of Holy Writ? If so, where is that genuine sense? Among the Second Advent Brethren? or the Halleluiah Band? or the Full Salvationists? or the believers in Joanna Southcott? or among the Quakers, or Jumpers, or Ranters? among the Glassites, or Free Gospellers, or Christadelphians? among the Benevolent Methodists, or the Army of the King's Own? among the Sandemanians, or the Strictly Undenominational, or the Protestants Adhering to Articles One to Eighteen?”<sup>2</sup>

Protestants, therefore, as such and in so far as they act consist-

<sup>1</sup> The argument of the *Variations* may be put in a syllogism: “The religion of Christ being based on a revelation which is unchangeable is itself unchangeable. But Protestantism is notoriously changeable. Therefore, Protestantism is not the religion of Christ.” Or thus: “The true religion is *one*, as truth is one. But Protestantism is not and does not pretend to be one. Therefore, Protestantism is not the true religion.

<sup>2</sup> The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small! They have ground Protestantism into hundreds of sects as euphoniouſly entitled as those in the text. Are not the very names of them enough to “move derision in worldlings and depraved politickes?”

ently with Protestant principles, have not and cannot have certainty in their understanding of Scripture. Consequently, as Protestants, they have not divine faith in the truths of Scripture. In this momentous conclusion—momentous because “without faith it is impossible to please God”—we are glad to have the opportunity to quote the Rev. Father Maclaughlan, who, in his admirable work, “Is One Religion as Good as Another?”<sup>1</sup> writes: “Lest I should be misunderstood (in the assertion that unless some infallible voice speaks it is impossible to make an act of faith) I wish to add: If Protestants can make an act of faith it is not *as Protestants or while resting on the principles of Protestantism.*” In other words, if Protestants make an act of faith at all, it is in virtue of an implicit obedience to that infallible voice against which their very name is a protest. Nor is this a new opinion. Balmez, in his “Protestantism and Catholicity,” chap. 4, writes: “Protestantism talks of faith, and its fundamental principle destroys it.” Again, Dr. O. A. Brownson, who was born in a Protestant community of Protestant parents and remained a Protestant until the age of forty-one, wrote:<sup>2</sup> “Protestants, in fact, have no faith; nay, so far from having any faith nearly all of them deny its possibility.”

Moreover, that faith is for them an impossibility Protestant apologists appear to recognize, implicitly at least. For, though without certainty there is no faith, they are quite ready to allow that in religion we must be satisfied with mere probability. In a work entitled “The Battle of Belief,” by the Rev. Nevison Lorraine, a Protestant clergyman in London, this doctrine seems to be enunciated.<sup>3</sup> In paragraph iii. he writes: “It is not only in matters of religion . . . that we permit ourselves to be governed . . . by a reasonable estimate of probabilities.” Again: “Possibly the religious doubter shrinks from the acceptance of the doctrines of religion . . . *on a balance of probabilities.* But the objection can only be taken by those who have not carefully considered the aspect of the question nor realized the weight which may attach to probable evidence.” More than this, he quotes with approval the following from Mr. Gladstone:<sup>4</sup> “The religious question is one in which the duty of following affirmative evidence, even though it should present to the mind no more than a *proba-*

<sup>1</sup> Appendix. This work in 1891 had already, and deservedly, reached the twenty-seventh thousand.

<sup>2</sup> *Essays on Theology*, etc., Anno 1852, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> There is much in this work deserving of praise. It is impossible not to admire the spirit in which it is conceived as well as the way in which it is executed. The good points are the author's own; the errors are those of his profession.

<sup>4</sup> “Probability as the Guide of Conduct,” *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1879.

*ble character and should not ab initio or even thereafter extinguish doubt*, has the closest and most stringent application." Yet probability, as every one knows, leaves room for prudent doubt.<sup>1</sup> For, as on the one hand, certainty, even the lowest, by definition<sup>2</sup> excludes, so, on the other hand, probability, even the highest, includes the prudent fear that the opposite may be true. The opposite of a probable proposition is itself probable. If, therefore, it is only probable that the Bible is the word of God, then it is also probable, on the other hand, that the Bible is *not* the word of God. Consequently, how can any one be obliged—and that, too, under pain of eternal loss—to have faith in, *i.e.*, to believe, *without doubting*, what is, perhaps, untrue? If the Bible is only probably true, then the obligation to receive the Bible is only a probable obligation; and thus, according to the axiom *lex dubia non obligat*, a man is morally justified in withholding belief.

This Protestant doctrine of probability, propounded by Mr. Gladstone and endorsed by Mr. Lorraine, was condemned two centuries ago by Pope Innocent XI. The condemned proposition ran as follows: "The assent of faith which is supernatural and conducive to salvation is consistent with a merely probable knowledge of revelation, nay, even with the fear that God has not spoken."<sup>3</sup>

Protestantism, then, leads to indifferentism, and, in the end, to rationalism. For its subjective rule of faith, private judgment is no fixed standard, but varies in various persons, and makes unity of belief impossible. Its objective rule of faith, the Bible, is, on

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone confirms this (*l. c.*): "Probability may be predicated whenever, in answer to the question whether a particular proposition be true, the affirmative chances predominate over the negative; *yet not so as (virtually) to exclude doubt.*"

<sup>2</sup> Certainty, according to Catholic writers, is made up of a double element, a negative and a positive; the former, which admits of no degrees, is the exclusion of all reasonable doubt or fear of the opposite; the latter is a positive adhesion of the mind. It is the common teaching of Catholic theologians that for supernatural faith it is an essential prerequisite that the articles of faith be, on some ground, *evidently credible*. Cf. Suarez De Vert. Theol. Disp. I., Sec. 6, St. Thomas, 2-1, q. 1, af. ad., 2d, says: "Non crederet quis nisi videret ea esse credenda vel propter *evidentiam* signorum vel aliquid hujusmodi." But the correlative of evidence is certainty.

<sup>3</sup> Assensus fidei supernaturalis et utilis ad salutem stat cum notitia solum probabili revelationis, imo cum formidine qua quis formidet ne non sit locutus Deus. Condemned March 2, 1679. Compare the Encycl. of Pius IX., Nov. 9, 1856: "Human reason. . . must diligently inquire into the fact of divine revelation so as to *know with certainty* that God has spoken." On the other hand, Mr. Gladstone (*l. c.*) says: "We are justified in being to the last degree suspicious of a doctrine which sets up the liberty of man as being . . . a positive ingredient in the claim of one alternative to be preferred above another." In other words, this champion of private judgment denies—seems to deny (*seems*, for his expression is vague and inaccurate)—the right to judge. Mr. Gladstone affirms—the Catholic Church denies—that you are bound to believe with divine faith before you have evidence. After all (*pace* Prof. Blackie), "the despotic and soul-stupefying sacerdotalism of the Romanists" compares not unfavorably with this unphilosophical view of the private judgmentarians.

Protestant principles, uncertain in many ways; uncertain as to its canon; uncertain as to its integrity; uncertain as to its genuine sense; uncertain as to the degree and kind of assent which it is competent to elicit. Protestantism cannot, therefore, be called a specific heresy. It is but a convenient label for a cluster or constellation of heresies developed by slow but sure evolution from that theological haze or sectarian nebula flung ha hazard into space by the great cloud-compeller, Martin Luther, and the other lesser gods of the reforming Olympus. Protestantism is the Odysseus of the heresies—*πολύμητις*—a heresy "of many shifts." It is the modern Old Man of the Sea, nimble to change its shape and assume any form by which to elude the grasp of the pursuing logician. With Gloucester, in Shakespeare's *Henry VI.*, it may truly say:

"I can add colors to the chameleon,  
Change shapes with Proteus to advantages."

It can be Ritualistic, Rationalistic, Romanish; Pantheist or Calvinist; Anglican, Lutheran, Unitarian; Low Church, Broad Church, High Church; blowing hot and blowing cold; expanding and contracting, rising and falling, according to the ever-changing pressure on the controversial barometer. It is never at a loss. From tradition it appeals to the Bible; from the Bible to the Fathers; from the Fathers to the Church, especially of "the first four centuries"; from the Church to reason and private judgment and certainty; from certainty to "probability that does not exclude doubt"; and then, as it were at last, it bolts into the covert of the "Higher Criticism" and the *zeitgeist*, only to issue forth at the other side and begin a new round of evasions, as unabashed and glib as ever, a perfect babblement of Babeldom, stiffly denying what it had before stoutly affirmed,<sup>1</sup> and presently as strongly affirming what it had just now indignantly denied; ever wonder-

<sup>1</sup> For example, is it not a historical fact that Protestantism at the outset proclaimed good works to be useless and faith alone necessary? Does not the Protestantism of to-day declare faith to be vain and good works—"a good life"—alone necessary? Did it not originally deny purgatory and accept hell? Does it not now uphold purgatory and reject hell? for God is too good, we are told by divines in high places, to burn the unrepentant sinner for all eternity; yet if hell is to end, it has ceased to be hell and has become purgatory. And is it not a fact that you may listen to one Protestant minister preaching the doctrine of the real presence and exhorting to hear Mass, while in the same city and at the same hour you may hear another Protestant minister denouncing the Eucharist and the Mass as idolatry and superstition? Macaulay (*Hist.*, chap. i.) fully recognized this "variability" of Protestantism: "Arminian doctrines which at the time of the accession of James no clergyman could have avowed without imminent risk of being stripped of his gown, were now the best title to preferment. A divine of that age, who was asked by a simple country gentleman what the Arminians held, answered with as much truth as wit, that they held all the best bishoprics and deaneries in England."

ing at your wonder, amused at your surprise, lifting its eyebrows at your scrupulosity, and quite sincerely scandalized at the narrowness of mind and rigid intolerance of the Catholic intellect that will persist in maintaining that of two contradictories both cannot at the same time be true.

Protestantism, therefore, has led—and could not but lead—to a Babel of contradictions amid the nubbub of which the English mind, seeking for truth in religion and finding none, amid the unrest of which the English heart, seeking spiritual consolation in religion and finding none, is driven out of very weariness to give up the quest in despair and to sit down perforce with any or no form of belief.

Yet indifferentism is false and without foundation in either reason or in revelation.

Indifferentism is against reason. For, let us ask, is this statement that one religion is just as good as another to be taken as a universal proposition, or as qualified by certain unstated limitations? And if as a general proposition, then let us make this further inquiry: If one religion is as good as another, is it as good to be a Buddhist as an Anglican? Is it as good to be a Mahomedan as a Methodist? Is it as good to be a follower of Confucius as to be a follower of William Penn? And if it *is* as good, why does England send out tens of thousands of pounds sterling a year for the conversion of the Buddhist and the Mohammedan and the disciple of Confucius. And if it is *not* as good, why not? If one religion is as good as another, why is not Buddhism or Mahomedanism or Confucianism as good as Anglicanism or Methodism or Quakerism? Modern enlightenment is not as yet prepared to push its theory to its full logical issue, and to assert the equality of all religions, whether Christian or Pagan. Advanced thought, for the present, limits its contention to this: that any one Christian religion is just as good as any other Christian religion. But what, we ask, is the *principle* of this limitation? If one religion is as good as another, *why* is not the worship of the non-Christian as good as the worship of the Christian? The answer comes pat enough: that faith in Christ is an essential of salvation. Well, but *why* is it an essential; on indifferentist principles? If a man is at liberty to reject *some* of the doctrines which Christ taught, and the indifferentist is satisfied with *some*, otherwise he would not be an indifferentist, why may he not reject them all? Why is a religion good if it accept some small fraction of our Lord's teaching, and yet bad if it accept none? Let the indifferentist enunciate, if he can, the principle according to which you may lawfully reject any part of Christ's teaching provided only that you do not reject the whole. The indifferentist position, in

truth, amounts to this: that a non-Christian religion is not as good as a Christian religion because at least a partial belief in Christ is an essential; but why, on his theory, it should be an essential he is quite unable to say.

But the difficulty does not stop here. We are told that even on indifferentist principles, belief in Christ is an essential condition of salvation. Now does the indifferentist mean by this, belief in Christ as God or only as man? If he means belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, then even Christian religions cannot all be equally good, and therefore indifferentism is false. For example, the Unitarians are a Christian sect and yet they deny the divinity of Jesus. Is then Unitarianism as good as any other religion? If it is, then faith in Christ, as God, is not an essential. If it is not, then the theory is false that any one Christian religion is as good as any other Christian religion. To save his position, therefore, the indifferentist is driven to confess that faith in Christ as man, is enough. But if this be true, indifferentism must become more elastic; it must open out its arms wider so as to embrace those non-Christian religions that believe in Christ as man. For example, he must include the Mohammedans who believe in Christ as man.<sup>1</sup> But in this case the liberal in religion must withdraw the limitation with which he started and must allow that if one religion is just as good as another, it is as good to be a non-Christian as a Christian; it is as good to be a Mahomedan as a Methodist. And if that view be correct, we may be allowed to ask again why Methodists subscribe so liberally towards Christian missions to the Mahomedans?

"One religion is as good as another." It follows, therefore, that the particular doctrine, the characteristic note, the distinguishing tenet which differentiates one Christian religion from another is unnecessary for salvation. You need not be a Catholic and may reject infallibility. You need not be an Anglican and may reject the Divinity of Christ. You may join the Greek Church and reject the procession of the Holy Ghost. You may be a Unitarian and reject the Trinity. With the Presbyterian you may reject Episcopacy. With the Plymouth Brethren you may reject an external priesthood. With Anglicans you may reject five of the seven sacraments. In a word, if indifferentism be true, for every Christian sect that ever has existed, does exist, or shall exist you may reject some point of the teaching of Jesus Christ, and as the name of these sects is legion, so legion must be the heads of the doctrine taught by Christ which are unnecessary for salvation. To

<sup>1</sup> Turien felt this difficulty and cut the knot by confessing that "les Mahométans ne sont qu'une secte du Christianisme," *Le vrai Systeme*, p. 237. Nor was Hoadley less tolerant. Cf. Milner's *Letters to a Prebendary*, Chap. 8.

sum this up, if the indifferentist will but calculate the amount of agreement among the Christian sects he will find that, differing from each other at every turn, they are unanimous in little more than this, that there exists a God who must be worshipped and adored. But the Buddhist and Mahommedan and Confucionist also, teach that there exists a God of some sort who must be worshipped and adored; and thus we are led back to the question originally proposed, if one religion is as good as another, why is not Buddhism and Mahommedanism and the creed of Confucius as good as Anglicanism or Methodism or the creed of William Penn?

That is the first objection, drawn from reason, against indifferentism; it degrades Christianity and leads to Paganism. I now go on to show that it degrades God and leads to Atheism.

For if there is one fact concerning Almighty God which plain reasoning makes more certain than another, it is that God is truthful and loves the truth. Even with a man, the deepest insult you can offer him is to dub him a liar and a lover of lies. Who then but a blasphemer would have the folly to say of God that *He* loves untruth? When our Lord described Satan, His arch enemy—the antithesis and antipodes of God—He called him a liar and the father of lies. God, therefore, loves the truth. But more than this, God *is* the truth. As our Saviour Himself said, “Ego sum Veritas.” “*I am the Truth.*” Truth is of the very essence and substance of God. Consequently, God not only does in fact love the truth, but by the very exigencies of His being, He is necessitated to love it. God can no more cease to love truth than He can cease to be God, and to conceive Him as loving error is, by conception, to destroy His Godhead. By a law of His being God hates falsehood with a measureless and undying hatred.

Now to be an indifferentist and to assert that God is as well satisfied with one religion as with another is to make God a lover of untruth. The proof is easy.

For these different religions contradict one another. Now of two contradictory propositions one is true, the other is false. Two contradictories cannot both be true. Given the truth of one, the falsehood of the other necessarily follows. To demonstrate the evident truth of the one is, by the very fact, to demonstrate the evident falsehood of the other. So that if two religions hold contradictory doctrines, one of the two must inevitably be teaching error. For example, one creed asserts the existence of hell where mortal sin unforgiven is punished eternally. Another creed denies the existence of hell. Again, one creed teaches that faith alone, without good works, is sufficient for salvation. Another creed denies that faith alone is sufficient for salvation. Once more, one

creed maintains that the Pope is infallible and enjoys universal jurisdiction. Another creed denies the infallibility of the Pope and contends that his jurisdiction is limited. Now of these six contradictory propositions chosen by way of specimen, three are necessarily true, the contradictory three are just as necessarily false. Either there is a hell or there is not. If there is, then the sect that denies the existence of hell obviously teaches error. Either faith alone without good works is sufficient for salvation, or it is not. If it is not, then the sect which denies the value of good works obviously teaches error. Either the Pope is infallible or he is not. If he is, then the sect which denies papal infallibility obviously teaches error.

To say, therefore, that God is equally pleased with all religions is the same thing as to say that God is equally pleased with truth and error. It is the same thing as to say that God is like the devil, a liar and a lover of lies. It is the same thing as to say that God has ceased to be God. Consequently indifferentism, both in theory and practice, leads to atheism. To affirm that one religion is as good as another, is, as far as lies in man's power, to pluck God down from His throne.

But the indifferentist is not quite run to earth yet. He has still one little pin-prick of a hole by which to escape. For, he says, although the different religions do indeed contradict one another, still the points of difference are minor, trivial, unimportant; while the points of agreement are solid, substantial, fundamental. The difference is accidental, the agreement essential.

Yes, that is the usual answer to the argument just put forward—an answer too foolish and too flimsy to call for a serious reply.

For is it a trivial question whether for all eternity the condemned sinner is to burn in hell-fire or is not? Is it accidental and unimportant whether in receiving the Holy Eucharist you receive the real and true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ or you do not? Is it not fundamental whether a priest can forgive sins duly confessed or cannot? Is it not essential whether the Pope is endowed with infallibility or is not? And if any indifferentist has the hardihood to contend that these points are not fundamental, then let him furnish us with a rule by which to distinguish fundamentals from non-fundamentals. "Question," says the Protestant Jurieu, "*epineuse et difficile à décider!*" If private judgment renders agreement in religion impossible, it also renders impossible agreement as to what are the fundamentals in religion. For example, is infant baptism a fundamental? The Anglican affirms, the Baptist denies it. Is belief in the Trinity a fundamental? The Baptist affirms, the Unitarian denies it. And in opposition to all the sects the Catholic Church

teaches that everything is fundamental which God has revealed and the Church has proposed for our belief.

We have now shown that indifferentism is a contradiction of reason; it degrades Christianity and leads to Paganism; it degrades Almighty God and leads to atheism.

Moreover, that this fashionable theory is not less opposed to revelation than to reason is clear as the noonday sun. It seems, however, useless to press this point since the argument from reason is so overwhelming that if it does not convince, nothing will. There is also this further objection to drawing out the Scriptural condemnation of indifferentism, that the very persons, in controversy with whom we appeal to the Bible, will persist in fixing their attention exclusively on some particular text which seems to make for their own pet heresy. Each sect, in practice, rejects that part of the Bible which condemns its own particular errors; and thus, though the assertion is ever being dinned into our ears that Catholics make little, and Protestants make much, of the Word of God, yet it is as assuredly true that the Catholic Church alone accepts the whole Bible as that the Protestant sects *collectively* reject the whole.<sup>1</sup> Each sect, in practice, rejects or misinterprets that part of Scripture which condemns its own heresy; and as the sects are beyond number, and as each sect has its own distinguishing heresy, the doctrines of Scripture which the sects, taken together, reject, can scarce be counted, consequently it is accurate to say that Protestantism, the collective name for the sects, rejects the Bible.

Such being the case, it would not appear to be of much use to point out that an addition to, or a subtraction from, revelation spoils the whole of our Lord's teaching; that the gospel of Christ is not a heterogeneous collection of disconnected statements and uncorrelated truths, but a compact and organic body of systematized doctrines, every part of which has a vital relation to every other part; a body of which not only the symmetry is marred, but the very life is taken away by extraneous addition or substantial subtraction. You might as well cut the telegraph wires and then try by the electric current to learn the thoughts of a distant correspondent as lop and top and prune away the doctrines of Christ and then attempt therefrom to grasp "the mind

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<sup>1</sup> Think of the amount of heresy that has clustered round such a text as: "Justus ex fide vivit" (Rom., i. 17, etc.). "The just man liveth by faith." It was on the strength of this and similar texts and of the doctrine of "Justification by faith alone," falsely deduced from the texts, that Luther bade his followers: "Pecca fortiter sed crede fortius." "Sin deeply, but believe more deeply." It mattered little to Luther that St. James and others had scotched this heresy in the text: "By works a man is justified and *not* by faith alone" (2, 24).

of Christ."<sup>1</sup> It is hard to understand how a Protestant can stand in the midst of the sects—while they hack and hew at the body of teaching which Christ gave to the world—while they make profession of every shade and phase of belief, unbelief and misbelief, and from the midst of this miscellaneous multitude can raise his hand and claim that *he* has the gospel of Christ; how he can read his Bible and not find matter for pause in that emphatic prayer of Christ to the Father, recorded by St. John,<sup>2</sup> that the children of the Church "may be *one* as we also are one"; how he can read without alarm that prophecy of Christ, recorded by the same apostle,<sup>3</sup> that "there shall be *one* fold and *one* shepherd," or that of another apostle,<sup>4</sup> that there is "*one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism"; how he can read in the gospels and not have forever ringing in his ears that solemn commission which Christ gave to his apostles and their successors to go and teach "*all* things whatsoever I have commanded you. He that believeth not shall be condemned";<sup>5</sup> how he can read and not stand and gaze "like Joshua's moon in Ajalon," when in that epistle to the Galatians he comes to the vehement language of St. Paul, pronouncing, in all the simplicity and fervor of his apostolic spirit, on the head of him who shall add to or take away from the Gospel of Christ and thereby turn that gospel into another gospel which is not another, that terrible "Let him be Anathema." By what process of reasoning does the "Bible Christian" make his indifferentism square with that most emphatic and twice repeated condemnation of the "perverters" of Christ's Gospel? "I wonder that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel which is not another; only there are some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we (the apostles) *or an angel from heaven* preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be ANATHEMA. As we said before, so now I say again, if any one preach to you a gospel other than that which you have received, let him be ANATHEMA." If St. Paul were sent down from heaven to-morrow to pronounce on modern indifferentism, it is hard to see what stronger language than this he could use.

But, it is often said, if the indifferentist accept some fragments of Christ's teaching, and be doing his best, may he not hope to be saved? Doing his best! Can it be said that any reasonable being, who thinks at all, and yet holds to such a hotch potch of open contradictions and glaring absurdities as indifferentism implies, is really doing his best? And if it be replied that there

<sup>1</sup> 1. Cor., 2, 16.<sup>2</sup> 17, 11.<sup>3</sup> 10, 16.<sup>4</sup> Ephes., 4, 5.<sup>5</sup> Mt., 28, 19; Mk., 16, 16.

exist people so dull, or so prejudiced, or so preoccupied as conscientiously and after every effort made, not to see their way out of this intellectual jungle, then we must call attention to these cardinal texts of Holy Writ that "without faith it is impossible to please God."<sup>1</sup> "Teaching them to observe *all* things; he who believes not shall be condemned." By faith, a living faith, a faith energizing in a good life, we are justified. Faith is the basis of the whole edifice of that spiritual life upon which salvation depends. Yet it would be hard to show how the indifferentist has faith—how he "believes without doubting" *all* that Christ has revealed—since his creed is that any religion is as good as any other. There is a condemned proposition—syllabus No. 18—which clearly guides us to the mind of the Church on this subject. The erroneous proposition runs as follows: "Protestantism is nothing else than a diverse form of the same true Christian religion, in which, as well as in the Catholic Church, it is given to please God." The indifferentist, therefore—to take the most rosy view of his future prospects—has small reason for self-gratulation in his indifferentism.

Nor is this all. There is another phase or fact of indifference to which we allude with much diffidence, because in a paper such as the present the writer's motive is liable to be construed into a desire for a controversial victory; and yet a phase of such practical import that no Catholic, and, above all, no priest, who has the salvation of souls at heart, can well pass it over in silence. For even if it be true that there is in the well-meaning indifferentist some sort of vague and inchoate faith which the goodness of our Father in heaven will, in the mysteries of His Providence, accept as solid and sterling coin of the spiritual mint, there still remains another question which solemnly and imperatively clamors for an answer. The indifferentist, like the rest of mankind, is a sinner. There is no uncharity, we hope, in that assumption. The holiest, the wisest, the strongest—David, Solomon, Samson—fell; nor is there aught in the liberal principles of the indifferentist to suppose that he is in morals above the common lot of men. If sin is so rampant, even among those who enjoy abundant help of the sacraments, the indifferentist is not likely without that aid to escape a fall—at least one fall. For, to give a foothold to our argument, one sin is sufficient. One serious fall is enough to occasion the supremely important question to which we refer, namely, *How is that sin to be forgiven?* Our merciful Lord has established a tribunal for the forgiveness of sin, the tribunal of confession. But the indifferentist rejects confession. Where then and how shall he find remittance? There is but one way—by

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<sup>1</sup> Heb., 11, 6.

an act of "perfect contrition." An act, however, of perfect contrition is not so easily elicited. Nay, we do not think it is harsh or anything but theological to say that it cannot be elicited without grave difficulty, and, in rare cases, by one who has lived long in the utterly unspiritual atmosphere of indifference. Men only do easily what they have a *habit* of doing, and the indifferentist, we fear, has not a habit of contrition. It is only a hallucination, it is a mere clutching at straws for the indifferentist to flatter himself that, having cast away far from him the normal means of forgiveness instituted and put within his grasp by our Saviour, having lived his life in minimizing and underestimating the teachings of His Divine Master, God will then give him easily and at once the transcendent grace of that sweet bruising of the heart we call contrition; to repent, not merely from a selfish motive touching personal interests, to repent, not merely from a motive of hope or fear—such as that by sin he has forfeited heaven and deserved hell—but from the supreme and sublime motive of charity or perfect love of God. The indifferentist who would cleanse his soul of sin by an act of perfect contrition must be chiefly and formally moved in that act—not necessarily so as to exclude, but certainly not so as to be primarily impelled by the lower considerations of hope and fear—by the selfless motive of pure love of God for God's own sake, whom he must love above all created things so as, if occasion arose, to be willing to endure any privation or any pain rather than offend God by a grievous sin. That such an act in such a case seems difficult none can deny; that it is impossible no theologian will insinuate. Heretics, indeed, as such and in so far as they knowingly persevere in that heresy, cannot be saved. Such, however, are probably few—"rari nantes in gurgite vasto." But there are many whose heresy is material only and not formal; who, invincibly ignorant, are in good faith and therefore belong to the *soul* of the Church, though separate from the visible communion. Of such, these were the consoling words uttered by Pius IX. in his encyclical to the Italian Episcopate, August 10, 1863: "It is known to us and to you that those who are in invincible ignorance of our holy religion and who, carefully fulfilling the natural law and the precepts thereof inscribed by God in the hearts of all, besides being in the disposition to obey God, live a good and upright life—can, by the aid of divine light and grace, attain to life eternal."

But none the less, indifferentism is the great moral curse of our age. It was intimated that when Christ cometh He shall scarcely find faith upon the earth. And that is what indifferentism is bringing the world to.

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