

## THE CATHOLIC ADVANCE

### DUBIOUS OUTLOOK FOR PROTESTANTISM

#### AN INTERESTING PRONOUNCEMENT

We take the following from a thoughtful leading article which appears in the *Presbyterian Outlook* of April 22:—

Pope Pius X. still hovers between life and death; the latest reports to hand are more favorable, and it appears possible that he may even recover to sit for a few years longer upon the throne of a Papacy which—to quote from Canon Barry's *The Papacy and Modern Times*—‘was for hundreds of years suzerain over kings, and the Holy Roman Empire was its armed defender. It is now the head of a world-wide voluntary association which wields no sword but its faith and which owes nothing to secular governments.’ This Roman Catholic authority considers the present situation, which has lasted for more than 40 years—dating back to that fateful 20th of September, 1870, when the Italian army entered Rome,—as ‘unique, dramatic, and pregnant of consequences.’ And the whole argument of Canon Barry's book goes to prove that the loss of temporal power by Pius IX. has gone to make more influential and widespread the spiritual empire of the Pope. The evidences of that growth are thus significantly commented upon:—

‘The extraordinary growth of Catholicism in free countries was evidenced by new hierarchies in England, Canada, the United States, and the British Empire at large. Its persistence under suffering was a jewel on the foreheads of Irish, South American, and missionary bishops, who saw one another face to face in what seemed to devout onlookers the full assembly of the saints. A young American Bishop of Richmond (Virginia), who lived to be Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, could tell us lately that the Church, neither persecuted nor favoured by civil power in those United States, now reckons twenty-two millions, and is on the way to become the largest as well as the strongest of religious associations in the Western world.

‘One of the wisest observations ever made on the whole subject is that of Count von Moltke: “The future of Rome does not depend on Rome itself, but on the direction that religious development will take in other countries.” And Lord Acton has written: “Pius IX. knew that in all that procession of seven hundred and fifty bishops one idea prevailed. Men whose word is powerful in the centres of civilisation, men who three months before were confronting martyrdom amongst barbarians, preachers at Notre Dame, professors from Germany, Republicans from Western America, men with every sort of training and every sort of experience had come together as confident and eager as the prelates of Rome to hail the Pope infallible.”

The burden of what we penned last week and continue now, and which seems appropriate in the face of what may be an early change in the personality of the Pope, is to emphasise a fact which Protestantism, and especially Presbyterianism, will do well to take cognisance of. With the loss of temporal power in the reign of Pius IX. commenced a new Papacy, which during the rule of Leo XIII. had full sway in the field of politics and diplomacy, but which has received added emphasis in the distinctly religious rule of Pius X. And the outstanding mark of this new Papacy is a policy of education, signifying the uprising of a cultured Catholicism. In the past, if we read history aright, the traditional policy of the Roman Catholic faith was to confine education largely to the priesthood, therein following the example of the outside world, which made knowledge the monopoly of the ruling classes. Among the other startling changes wrought by the force of an irresistible flood of democratic opinion, education has become common property, not alone free to all who will put forth their hands to grasp it, but positively forced upon them—in the English-speaking lands at least. And one of the outstanding marks of the times is the manner in which the Papacy has taken hold of

modern educational propaganda, and is utilising it to some purpose. Leo XIII. set himself the task of political propaganda, and he educated the Powers in Roman Catholic ideals; to Pius X. was bequeathed the far more tremendous work of educating the people—not his own flock alone, but the people at large.

The Catholic educational campaign had small but subtle beginnings, but its present extent and influence is only slowly commencing to dawn upon the Protestant consciousness. The cleverest men in journalism and literature to-day—we speak, of course, of British journalism and English literature—are avowed and pronounced Roman Catholics; and it is hardly possible to take up one of the leading reviews or literary journals without coming across one or more articles in which current events are interpreted in the light of the Roman Catholic faith. Nor can there be found one of the many series of cheap reprints, such as the ‘Home University Library,’ the ‘People's Books,’ or the ‘Cambridge Manuals,’ which does not contain a volume—frequently volumes—devoted to expounding Catholic principles and doctrines. Monsignor Benson, son of the late Archbishop of Canterbury, and who is on the point of publishing his ‘Apologia’ under title *Confessions of a Convert*, is one of the most active of the Roman Catholic litterateurs; in the guise of fiction he has not only re-written English history from the stand-point of his Church; he has even projected himself into the future and portrayed the condition of the world when the Pope shall once more reign supreme. Mr. Hilaire Belloc is equally indefatigable, both in correcting what he alleges to be the mistakes in Protestant history and in Protestant accounts of the great battles of Europe, but also in penning brilliant and exceedingly clever essays in which Roman Catholic thought is continually apparent. Numbers of the most popular and prominent novelists are devout Catholics, and their writings can be always counted upon as ‘clean.’ Not content with the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, there is being published in New York *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, in 18 volumes. Canon William Barry, keen critic, and contributor to the *British Weekly* and the *Bookman*, is also a leading Catholic; and the latest and most striking illustration of this continuous propaganda is the work of Mr. G. K. Chesterton, a litterateur whose flight across the sky of journalism has been meteorlike in its brilliancy. Mr. Chesterton is a valiant fighter for the faith which is in him, and he has essayed the difficult task of interpreting the English literature of the Victorian era. It is a curious commentary on Protestant apathy that English literature, judging from University courses and University classes, ends abruptly at Tennyson and Browning. In all the New Zealand Universities, whilst French and German literature courses take cognisance of the modern writers in English literature there are no modern writers. And it is also curious that the only two books extant which give or profess to give any account of the modern movement in literature are Mr. G. K. Chesterton's *The Victorian Age in Literature*, and Mr. J. M. Kennedy's *English Literature, 1880-1905*—the one written by an avowed Roman Catholic and the other by a foremost disciple of Nietzsche.

In that valuable volume *Among Famous Books*, the Rev. John Kelman, most thoughtful and cultured of Scotch Presbyterian divines, writes: ‘Thus we find paganism—in some quarters paganism quite openly confessed, occupying a prominent place in our literature to-day.’ And again, ‘there is the general fact that before any literature becomes pagan the land must first have been paganised.’ And the Rev. John Kelman cites as the two prominent forces stemming the pagan current in literature two Catholic writers, Mr. G. K. Chesterton and the late Francis Thompson. The contrast between Protestant and Presbyterian apathy in journalism and literature—an apathy so profound that the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand, in Australia, and even in Scotland can scarcely keep alive its own Church papers—we have a Roman Catholic activity which loses no chances, but embraces every opportunity to educate the people everywhere in Roman Catholic principles. . . . And how successful this procedure is becoming is evident from the numerous accessions to the Roman Catholic Church continually reported

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