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# PROTESTANTISM: A HOUSE DIVIDED

By the Rev. Edward V. Dailey,  
Holy Name Cathedral,  
Chicago, Ill.



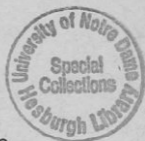
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## Protestantism : A House Divided

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The Twentieth Century has been primarily an age of disillusionment. The death of an elaborate prohibition movement, the attacking of the ideals of womanhood under the philosophy of the new "liberalism", the inadequacy of old political standards to steady a tottering world, the rending apart of the sacramental character of matrimony and the home, and particularly the breaking down of faith in many of the religious sects of the western world, are typical of the revolution which is our generation's heritage.

Naturally there had to be a definite reaction. It was not surprising to see these present years ushering in new deals to resurrect confidence, crusade of decency, emphasis on Catholic Action by His Holiness, the Pope, and incidentally an octave of prayer for church Unity as an antidote to the uni-

versal collapse of the reformed religions. Last year the octave was scarcely one day old when the world read of the death of Lord Halifax. For sixty years, he had labored for the union of the English Church with Rome, side by side with the renowned Cardinal Mercier. His participation in the Malines Conversations with the Primate of Belgium were bound to fail, as the great churchman had the usual continental lack of appreciation for the English psychology. With Halifax, he had hoped to conclude some sort of a wholesale rapprochement of the Anglicans with Rome. But the possibility of corporate reunion failed in 1896, when Leo XIII pronounced once and for all Anglican Orders to be invalid.

### **Attracted by Unity**

It is coincidental that the foremost proponent of the union should die as prayers were besieging heaven for him and his brethren. His life had spanned nearly a century,

the century which witnessed the conversions of Newman and Manning, with the subsequent submission of hundreds of respected ministers to Rome. However, they were individualists who had thought their way to truth independent of mass movements. Almost to a man it was disunion that shook them free from the machinery of Anglicanism as it was rock-ribbed unity that forced them to cling, wet and torn by the tempest, beneath the Rock of Peter. The old Viscount, seeing it all, waited for the band wagon to bear him into Rome. Death found him still outside the Church, which alone possessed that ideal of unity which was his consuming passion.

It brings into sharp relief the legacy that is ours. The mark of Unity has become the watershed dividing two torrents of thought. On one side flows serene, unchanging dogma, and on the other, a turbulent whirl-pool of differences and contradictions. The division

forms naturally from the theology involved, that of immutable truths springing from Christ's words to teach "these truths" until the end of time against the suicidal tenet of private judgment, which engenders as many religions as there are opinions. This principle of death has naturally abetted a thousand and one atrocities.

### **The Facts**

In this consideration, the sharp divisions in religious thought will be examined. Almost without the heat of argument these will yield a harvest of inevitable conclusions. From it all the self-evident verdict should spring, namely, that nowhere except within the Unity of Rome can there be hope against the present day background of divergent opinions. It is the doctrinal Moses that alone can liberate a world from a slavery of doubt and the desert wastes of contradiction.

Some time ago, Professor George H. Betts, teacher of religion at Northwestern University, Chicago,



sent out a questionnaire to seven hundred Protestants ministers. He found that only eighty per cent held that God is omnipotent, eighty-two per cent, that God controlled the universe through his personal presence, eighty-seven per cent that Jesus lived a life on earth without sin, ninety-five per cent that life continues after death.

A few months ago he questioned over one thousand pastors of Chicago, representing nineteen non-Catholic denominations. Twenty-six per cent of these questioned the Divinity of Christ; the majority of them disbelieved the existence of the devil and urged that children should not be taught that there were certain punishments for sin; forty-one per cent doubted the existence of heaven sufficiently to ask its elimination from Church teaching; and eight per cent disbelieved absolutely in immortality.

### **A Shocking Report**

The shocking character of this report was duly registered in every

paper of the country. It seemed almost unbelievable that men in the livery of God's servants could call in question the very God by which they officially existed. How could sincere ministers preach to their congregation loyalty to Christ's teachings, the rewards of a good life, the hope of resurrection, when nearly five hundred out of a thousand of them doubted the existence of heaven? And these men evidently represent, not a local condition, but a cross-section of the Protestant thought of the country.

For a moment no sane mind can comprehend the situation. We are either surrounded by religious charlatans and hypocrites of the worst dye, or we are cursed with a peculiar intellectual blindness that cannot fathom the existence of monumental contradictions. As blindness is generally a misfortune unmixed with malice, we prefer to think these men victims of their suicidal system of thought.

After all they are consistently

inconsistent in their teachings. Their original contention is that the individual interpretation of the Scriptures is the foundation of their Protestant Creed. If a person feels that the sun actually rises and the earth stands still, for him it is law, contrary arguments notwithstanding. If a thorough-going Calvinist holds firmly to the opinion that nearly everyone is damned, even while his minister preaches that Hell is simply a bogey used by legislators to terrify youth into rectitude, they cannot be ridiculed because it is every man for himself in the potpourri called private judgment.

## Reactions

But to what a pass has this principle brought a Protestant world! National conventions, manifestations of fear for the perseverance of Protestantism, suggestions of compromise and unity have become an order of the day.

The Methodist, Reverend Charles

De Bow, has said that Protestantism has failed on seven points. "The second wrong of Protestantism is the enormous number of divisions which have developed in the body. The average Protestant could not, to save his soul, stand in his place and give a reason for his denominational faith."

An Episcopalian, Reverend Dr. Thomas Tracy, wrote in the same vein about the splits occurring in the modern revolution. He concludes that Protestantism "is in danger of committing suicide."

Reverend Dr. Clayton Rice, President of the State Council of the Congregational Christian Churches of Montana, declared recently that Protestantism must unite or face downfall.

Not long ago England was startled by the failure of the Archbishop of York to take action against Dr. David, a Unitarian, who disbelieves in the Divinity of Christ, and yet would mount a cathedral pulpit of an Anglican Communion and spout

forth his heresies. An indignant letter from Lord Hugh Cecil followed the controversy. "How can we deny it if Romans tell us our church is a city of confusion?", he wrote.

### The Primitive Church

But there is a refreshing side to the picture. It is centuries before the cataclysm of the reformation, years before the Migration of Nations, back to the time of the golden age of the Roman Empire, when Emperor Augustus held sway over the seas and the lands, the joys and sorrows of the known world.

In his province of Judea, an obscure Galilean hurled defiance at the might of Caesar. But Rome failed to realize the power of that challenge. After all, where were the Nazarene's fleets, where marched His legionnaires, where flashed the cruel and unflinching eye of the Roman conqueror? Instead, He healed the sick, raised the dead to life, preached a gospel of charity and love; and, finally, was He not pinioned to a

cross between two thieves and left to die, a dismal failure of a man?

In the dizzy swirl of history, a most amazing scene transpired, unnoticed by the multitudes. In the fastness of His retreat, in the mountains of Galilee, the risen Christ struck life into His Church. "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth: going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

Then and there He sent them forth with the power of God and the armor of His abiding presence. Back of this commission stood the centuries of prophecy. The Messiah would reign over a resurrected kingdom of Israel. It would be universal in its sway and have a unified communion. "And He will teach us his ways and we will walk in His paths; for the law shall go forth out of

Sion, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem."

Christ during His public ministry immediately identified himself with these Messianic prophecies, leaving no doubt that He was to weld together the elements of His kingdom. "The time is accomplished and the kingdom of God is at hand." During His last forty days on earth he fashioned the framework of His Church. He established the primacy of Peter and his successors as the seat of all authority. He inculcated definite dogmas concerning divorce, purity, and charity, and He instituted the seven sacraments in no uncertain terms such as: "Unless you are born again of water and the Holy Ghost you shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven." "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you." Apparently, the salvation of one's soul would depend generally upon the reception of these sacraments and the acceptance

of His doctrine. "Going into the whole world, preach the gospel to every creature...he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned.

Evidently these sacraments were to be seven fountain heads of grace that were to sweep through the centuries upon all Christians in streams as wide as the universal heart of man.

Just here is contained a world of theology. Christ was God. He had a vision of the future of His Church as if it were present. He knew how human institutions would perish beneath the march of time; the longest-lived dynasties would be as nothing compared to the indefinite span of his Church's life. He knew too how fickle and destructive were the minds of men. The doctrines of philosophers, such as Aristotle and Plato, the constitutions of governments, the organization of human institutions could not persist unchanged for any length of time. They would all be distorted, misinterpreted, often times completely destroyed within a few



hundred years. Yet He wove into the fabric of His Church a world of ideas and expected them to remain intact until the consummation of the world. He put the seal of his own guaranty upon that seemingly impossible situation. "I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you forever—the Spirit of Truth."

Christ being God, must have known the tremendous odds pitted against any organization to exist forever beneath the crushing Juggernaut of history. Still He made eternal glory dependent upon submission to definite truths that were to be taught to every one by the apostles and their successors. Certainly He would have been unjust to make the salvation of countless millions hinge upon a body of doctrine if He did not at the same time give to it the protection of His omnipotence, so that every creature could reach it in its original at any time during the life of His Church.

In the light of these truths, the important event in the cenacle takes on

tremendous significance. It was the night of His betrayal, the eve of His death. Solicitude was naturally uppermost in His heart. His apostles had left everything, friends and relatives, their trades and professions to follow Him. He must not leave them shorn of power and protection. "Peace I leave with you; let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid." And in their memories were seared the indelible words of consecration: "This is my body; this is my blood."

Then in a remarkable flush of gratitude He lifted His eyes to His Father. He actually assailed the parapets of heaven. "Holy Father, keep them in thy name, that they may be one as we also are one." And Christ concluded His discourse with a fervent hope not unmixed with fear. "And not for them only do I pray, but for them also, who through their word shall believe in me, that they may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee."

Just a moment before, the Master

had provisioned the future. He pointed out the trials through which his Church must pass. No doubt before his mind flashed the debacle of the Reformation, when his beloved doctrines were to be rent asunder by an avalanche of contradictory opinions, when the Primacy of Peter, upon which He had built His Church was to be denied, when the sacraments, into which He had even poured forth His life blood, were to be dashed to death, when the sacrifice of the Mass, the drama of His own painful death, was to be hurled aside in favor of blasphemy. And men, claiming to be shepherds of souls, would one time stand up and call in question His very divinity and impugn the virginity of His Blessed Mother.

No wonder the final discourse to His disciples was freighted with foreboding and filled with prayers for steadfast unity. To imagine that Christ could act otherwise, could be unmoved by that horrible vision is to shatter the ideals for which He stood, the headship of a *Church*, not church-

es: the existence of a definite consistent doctrine, not a haphazard, catch-as-catch-can system of thought.

As we compare the present day religious hysteria with the well-defined body of truths that Christ initiated, we are rightly startled. As the centuries march on, the gap continues and widens between the original structure of Christ's Church and the many modern sects and creeds with scarcely a point in common. By no stretch of the imagination can we identify these as primitive Christianity.

### **The Future**

However, there has been a definite swinging back to Rome. Necessarily, men sometime must fight back to the sanity of thought. They feel a need of a definite firm belief. . .four square gospels; revivalist meetings; the rapid-fire quotation of scripture; the insistence on a vague brotherhood of man might stimulate enthusiasm. But all this does not cement a single conviction in them.

In their search for stability they cannot escape the spell of Rome. Naturally, we find the pressure of strong Romeward movements from all directions. Within the Protestant stronghold, the situation has caused real alarm. A bulletin of the Protestant Episcopal Laymen's Association, lately published, reveals that "Anglo-Catholicism is not a mere matter of a little more ritual. But it strikes at the very existence of the Protestant and Episcopal church." The association further laments "that the Anglo-Catholic movement is in union with the Roman Church under the spiritual authority of the pope."

Although there have been many such rumors of reunion, actually there have not been monumental mass conversions outside of the oriental rites, perhaps because reasoning is involved and not just submission. The average non-Catholic is not so close to the ideals of Catholicism as to simply throw his allegiance at the feet of Peter without suffering a complete revolution in his sensibilities.

There is a rough, argumentative route to follow. The eminent English minister, Dr. E. Orchard, who has been converted and at this writing is awaiting ordination describes the process by saying:

“If we would be human we must be rational, if rational, ethical, if ethical, evangelical, if evangelical, Catholic, if Catholic, Roman; that is the logic of progress, freedom, light. If one rejects the Roman claims one must, eventually, reject Catholicism if Catholicism is rejected, then gradually go Doctrine, Sacraments, Scripture, Christ, God, man, hell, then Heaven; the next world, then this.”

It is typical of the struggle of the individualist towards the Church.

### **Conclusion**

Should Civil War continue to wage on the religious battle front, the divisions will continue to multiply as have the more than two hundred sects that already function within the nar-

row limits of the United States. The result is a turbulent sea of dissent, dissatisfaction and bewilderment. It is not surprising to find intellectual men and women frequently disgorged upon the strands of truth.

And across the ages still echo the words of Christ. "Thou art Peter, upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." As we contemplate the unbroken stream of truth that has coursed through the ages and on the other hand see the whirlpools of contradiction, we realize the import of the Master's words.

It is the rock of Peter against "a divided house".

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