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# THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

Ἡμερησίως ὁ Θεὸς αἰὶν ᾠγα ἡμῶν, ἀγῶν ῥιθμῶν αἰὶν ἀν ὕψους θεαγῶν ὁ ἡμῶν.

LUKE II. 14.

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### PHILIP MELANCTHON.

THERE is a very common disposition among a large part of mankind, to judge of the characters and motives of persons in past and present times solely by the nature and results of the events with which they have been connected, without taking into account their personal history or the peculiar circumstances in which they have been placed.

It has been the destiny of some of the worst and most selfish individuals of whom history makes mention to live in periods of social calm and repose, and thus they often escape censure from the mass of ordinary readers, because they glided noiselessly down the stream of time, and because the circumstances of the times in which they lived did not bring the vices of their character into prominent and painful notoriety. On the other hand, in seasons of great political movements, which give rise to much disturbance and agitation, those persons who do not look below the surface are apt to attribute much of the bitterness and ill-will which is engendered, to the fault of the chief actors in the contest, whom the events of the times have forced into public notice, although, perhaps, the individuals who are thus harshly censured may have been the most gentle, peaceful, and amiable among men.

This habitual tendency to judge of men's characters solely by results is especially apt to lead to erroneous conclusions in religious questions, because the secret springs actuating men's conduct in this case are more remote from public view. The mass of mankind are frequently very unwilling to admit that the leaders in a religious movement which is opposed to their own pre-conceived opinions, and which gives rise to angry discussion and controversy, are acting under the influence of true religious convictions. One of the charges against the early teachers of the Gospel, as we learn from Scripture, was, that they were men "who have turned the world upside down"—(Acts xvii. 6.) Yet, while every one must acknowledge that the natural result of the preaching of true religion ought always to be "peace and good-will towards men," it would be very rash to conclude that the preaching of the Gospel cannot, or even that it ordinarily will not, give rise to consequences of a very opposite kind. We may illustrate our meaning by an example from every-day life.

Among the many wonderful discoveries of modern science which have been applied in the production of objects of art or domestic utility, perhaps the process commonly known by the name of electrotyping, or electro-metallurgy, is one of the most strange and interesting. When a countryman, as he walks along the streets of a large city, sees displayed in the window of a silversmith's shop a number of beautiful articles, shining with all the brilliancy of gold or silver, if the inquiry should occur to his mind, how some of these articles were made, his first and most natural impression would certainly be, that they were formed by some skilful workman, and that the precious metal was moulded and fashioned by the direct art of man. In this supposition, however, he would be quite mistaken. The process of electrotyping, as many of our readers are aware, is carried out by the agency of nature, acting almost as spontaneously as in the growth of a flower or tree. A lump of gold or silver, and the article which is designed to be covered with it, are placed side by side, at some distance from each other, in a suit-

able liquid chemical solution, and an electric current is established between them. By a gradual, noiseless, and almost magical change, the precious metal is transferred to the surface of the mould. All its delicate forms and outlines are reproduced with the most scrupulous accuracy; and thus, without human agency, a statue or other ornament of common iron or even plaster may be exquisitely moulded in any proposed metal, and may acquire all the external appearance and qualities of the purest gold or silver.

Let us now suppose that our friend the countryman, after observing these beautiful results of modern science, were suddenly transported to the top of some lofty mountain, and exposed to the fury of a tremendous storm and tempest. Let him listen for a while to the sharp peals of thunder, repeated by a thousand echoes from the surrounding hills; let him be dazzled and almost blinded by the vivid glare of the forked lightning, recurring at momentary intervals, and rendering every object distinct—the houses, the lake, the distant mountains—each flash lighting up the whole horizon with its violet hue, and followed as instantaneously by the darkness of night. After witnessing this terrific display of power and grandeur, let him be told that these awful results were produced by the same electric agency which silently wrought the silver statue or moulded the gold ornament, and we doubt not that the first feeling in his mind, on hearing this strange fact, would be one of entire and absolute incredulity.

It is just so in matters of religion. When men see one of their friends or neighbours growing more kind, more gentle, more holy than he was before, exhibiting more and more in his life and conduct the work of the Spirit of God, moulding and fashioning his heart and affections,—in such a case they are, perhaps, willing enough to admit that religion is the cause of the change of which they see such visible proofs. But let another man, whose motives, perhaps, are just as upright, and whose piety is just as sincere, be actively engaged in some great religious movement, to which they are opposed, and which stirs up angry controversy and dissension, and gives rise to important changes in the state, the world is very ready to deny that his conduct is influenced by true religion. He is forthwith stigmatised by the public voice as a fanatic, if not an impostor, and his actions are attributed to vanity or a misguided love of notoriety, or some other equally uncharitable cause.

It would, perhaps, be treading on dangerous ground to apply these remarks to our own country and the times in which we live. We shall, therefore, adopt the same course which we have already more than once pursued, and derive our illustration from the page of history.

At the period of the great Reformation in Germany, in the sixteenth century, two names stand prominently forward as those of the leaders in that memorable religious movement—Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon. Both were admirably fitted for the work to which God's providence called them, of awakening men's minds from the corruptions of Romanism, and leading them to a knowledge of gospel truth. For many years they were jointly engaged in the great contest for religious liberty and truth,—the one with the energy of St. Paul, the other with the meekness of St. John. Luther himself has admirably expressed the difference of their respective callings. "I was born," said he, "to contend on the field of battle with factions and with wicked spirits. This is the reason that my writings abound so much with war and tempests. It is my task to uproot the stock and the stem, to clear away the briars and underwood, to fill up the pools and the marshes. I am the rough woodman who has to prepare the way and smooth the road. But Philip advances quietly and softly. He tills and plants the ground; he sows and waters it joyfully, according to the gifts that God has given him with so liberal a hand."\* Such being the character of Melancthon, as described by one who knew him well, a brief sketch of the life and character of this eminent man may possibly prove interesting to some of our readers.

Philip Melancthon was born at Bretten, a small town near Heidelberg, in the year 1497. He was a near relative of the celebrated Reuchlin, who induced him to change his father's surname of Schwarzerde (which literally means *Black Earth*) for the more classical Greek name by which

he has since been commonly known.<sup>b</sup> Melancthon's talents attracted Reuchlin's attention at a very early age, and he received from him, in approbation of his boyish acquirements, a present of two books, a Greek grammar and a Bible. It is not impossible that the inclinations of the youthful scholar may have been decided by this circumstance, and that the talents which would otherwise have been employed on other subjects may have been thus turned into their destined channel, and made subservient to the great work in which his life was afterwards to be engaged.

Melancthon first pursued his studies at the University of Heidelberg, and then removed to Tubingen, where, after having afforded the most satisfactory proofs of his abilities and literary progress, he was created Doctor in philosophy in the year 1514, before he had attained the age of seventeen. The talent displayed in some of his publications at this time drew forth from no less a pen than that of Erasmus the following commendation:—"What hopes may we not entertain of Philip Melancthon, who, though as yet very young, and almost a boy, is equally to be admired for his knowledge in Greek and Latin literature. What quickness of invention! What purity of diction! What powers of memory! What variety of reading! What modesty and gracefulness of behaviour!"<sup>c</sup>

While Melancthon was at Tubingen, he was a diligent student of Holy Scripture; and the Bible, which, as we before remarked, he had received as a present from Reuchlin, was his constant companion. During the time of divine service especially, Melancthon held this book constantly in his hand, and diligently employed himself in turning over its pages; and as it was much larger than an ordinary prayer-book, this practice attracted notice and excited a good deal of prejudice against him, and insinuations were made that he spent his time at church in reading what was unbecoming the place and the occasion. It would have been well for Melancthon's detractors if they had followed, instead of censuring, his conduct, and if they, like him, had valued the word of God above the legends of the Breviary.

The time had now arrived when all the thinking minds of Germany were forced to take part on one side or the other on the great question of the Reformation. In 1517 Luther published his ninety-five famous propositions, condemning the doctrine of indulgences, by which he proclaimed to the world his breach with the Church of Rome. Cardinal Eckius replied to these propositions; and, after some delay, a public disputation was arranged between the respective combatants, which was held at Leipsic in the year 1519.

This memorable discussion occupied seventeen days, and was conducted chiefly between Eckius and Carolstadt, who defended Luther's views. We have not space to enter fully into the particulars; but one circumstance occurred at the commencement which deserves to be noticed. When Eckius entered the great hall of the ducal palace, where the discussion was held, his eyes were fixed for a moment on some books which lay on the table before his adversary's chair: they were the Bible and the Fathers. "I decline the discussion," exclaimed he suddenly, "if you are permitted to bring your books with you." Could he have made a plainer admission that *victory*, and not *truth*, was his object?

By the side of Luther sat a young man of small stature, who appeared little more than eighteen years old. This was the young professor of Tubingen, who had already acquired a wide-spread celebrity. "To look at Melancthon," wrote a Swiss theologian who studied at Wittenberg, "you would say he was a mere boy; but in understanding, learning, and talent, he is a giant; and I cannot comprehend how such heights of wisdom and genius can be found in so small a body." During the discussion, he remained quietly seated among the spectators, and carefully listened to the words of the theologians. Eckius tossed himself about in the pulpit, paced to and fro, spoke at the full pitch of his sonorous voice, had a

<sup>b</sup> The Greek name Μελαγχθων is of the same meaning as the German Schwarzerde.

<sup>c</sup> At Deum immortalem! quam non spem de se prebet etiam adulescens et puer Philippus ille Melancthon, utraque literaturæ pæne ex æquo suscipiendus! Quod inventionis acumen! quæ sermone puritas! quanta reconditarum rerum memoria! quam varia lectio! quam verecunda regisque prorsus iadolis festivitas!—Erasmii Opera. Annot. in Nov. Test. ad I. Thess. c. 2.

\* Lutheri Opera, Tom. xiv., p. 200.

reply ready for every argument urged by Carolstadt, and bewildered his hearers by his memory and skill. More than once, when Carolstadt was near giving way under his powerful declamation, Melancthon whispered a word, or slipped him a piece of paper, on which the answer was written. Eckius having perceived this on one occasion, and feeling indignant that this grammarian, as he called him, should dare to interfere in the discussion, turned towards him, and said haughtily, "Hold your tongue, Philip; mind your studies, and do not disturb me." Perhaps Eckius at that time foresaw how formidable an opponent he would afterwards find in this young man.

The calm Melancthon easily detected the weak points of the discussion. "We cannot help feeling surprised," said he, with that wisdom and beauty which characterized almost all his words, "when we think of the violence with which these subjects were treated. How could any one expect to derive any profit from it? The Spirit of God loves retirement and silence; it is thus that He penetrates deep into our hearts."

The result of the Leipsic disputation, however, produced a deep and permanent impression upon Melancthon's mind. Till that time literature had been his sole occupation. The conference gave him a new impulse, and launched the eloquent professor into the career of theology. From that hour his extensive learning bowed before the word of God. He received the truths of the Gospel with the simplicity of a child, explained the doctrines of salvation with a grace and clearness that charmed all his hearers, and trod boldly in the new faith opened out before him; for, said he, "Christ will never abandon His own followers."

The imprudence of Eckius first called forth the powers of Melancthon as a theological writer. Eckius published a letter relating to the discussion of Leipsic, in which he spoke contemptuously of Melancthon as "a grammarian of Wittenberg." Melancthon, in his reply, at once fastened on the question, which is the central point of the whole controversy with the Church of Rome, the question of the Rule of Faith. He showed, in the clearest manner, that we ought not to interpret Scripture by the Fathers, but the Fathers by Scripture. "How often has not Jerome been mistaken!" said he; "how frequently Ambrose! how often their opinions are different! and how often they retract their errors! There is but one Scripture inspired by the Holy Ghost, and pure and true in all things."

"Luther," he continues, "does not follow certain ambiguous explanations of the ancients, and why should he? When he explains the passage of St. Matthew—'Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church,' he says the same thing as Origen, who alone is a host, as Augustine in his homily, and as Ambrose in his sixth book upon St. Luke. I will mention no others. What, then (it may be asked), will you say that the Fathers contradict one another? and is there anything astonishing in that? I believe in the Fathers because I believe in Scripture. The meaning of Scripture is to be obtained by comparing Scripture with Scripture; it is deduced from the thread and connection of the discourse. There is a philosophy that is enjoined us as regards holy Scripture, and that is, to bring all human opinions and maxims to it as to a touchstone by which to try them."

For a very long period such powerful truths had not been set forth with so much clearness. The Word of God was restored to its place, and the Fathers to theirs. The simple method by which we may arrive at the real meaning of Scripture was firmly laid down. Melancthon furnished the means of replying to all those who, like Eckius, should perplex this subject, even to the most distant times. The feeble grammarian had risen up, and the broad and sturdy shoulders of the Romish champion had bent under the first movement of his arm.

In 1521, Melancthon published his valuable work, entitled, "Common-places of Theology," which passed through sixty editions in its author's lifetime. It contained a summary of Christian doctrine, in which the truths asserted by the Reformers were reduced to a system, and thus more easily inculcated. The subjects of difference with the Roman Church were distinctly stated, with reference to Scriptural proofs, and without controversial argument—a method of persuasion better suited to moderate minds than the most eloquent and impassioned appeals. Luther pronounced the strongest eulogy on this production of his friend. He ranked it incomparably higher than the writings of the Fathers, and pronounced it to be the best book he had ever seen, except the Bible.

From this time the personal history of Melancthon is identified with that of the Reformation. He shared in all the labours of Luther and the other Reformers; and his pen was incessantly exercised to explain their own views, or to refute the attacks of their opponents. The well known "Confession of Augsburg," which was presented to the Emperor Charles V., at the diet held in that city in 1530, and which embodied the chief doctrines of the

Reformation, proceeded mainly from Melancthon's pen. On various occasions, when attempts were made to reconcile the contending parties, Melancthon was willing to make any sacrifice for the sake of peace, short of surrendering the great fundamental doctrines on which the Reformers based their opposition to the corruptions of the Church of Rome. More than once his gentle and peaceful disposition led him to adopt a temporising course, where the more vigorous mind of Luther would have advocated bold and uncompromising measures; but throughout the many years during which these two remarkable men were engaged in this momentous contest, their differences of opinion never caused any serious estrangement; and when Luther was removed from the world in 1546, Melancthon was chosen to pronounce the funeral oration over his grave.

Melancthon survived his friend about fourteen years, and his death at length took place in the year 1560. His character is thus ably summed up by the German historian<sup>b</sup>—

"Melancthon had the rare talent of discerning truth in all its most intricate connections and combinations, of comprehending at once the most abstract notions and expressing them with the utmost perspicuity and ease. And he applied this happy talent in religious disquisitions with unparalleled success, insomuch that it may be safely affirmed that the cause of true Christianity derived from the learning and genius of Melancthon more signal advantages and a more effectual support than from any of the other theologians of the age. His love of peace and concord, which was partly owing to the sweetness of his natural temper, made him desire with ardour that a reformation might be effected without producing a schism in the Church, and that the external communion of the contending parties might be preserved uninterrupted and entire. This spirit of mildness and charity, carried, perhaps, too far, led him sometimes to make concessions that were neither consistent with prudence nor advantageous to the cause in which he was engaged. It is, however, certain that he gave no quarter to those more dangerous and momentous errors that reigned in the Church of Rome, but maintained, on the contrary, that their extirpation was essentially necessary, in order to the restoration of true religion. When the hour of real danger approached, when things bore a formidable aspect, and the cause of religion was in imminent peril, this man, usually so timorous, was converted all at once into an intrepid hero, who looked danger in the face with unshaken constancy, and opposed his adversaries with invincible fortitude. Had his courage been more uniform and steady, his desire of reconciling all interests and pleasing all parties less violent and excessive, his triumph over the superstitions imbibed in his infancy more complete, he must deservedly have been considered as one of the greatest among men."

THE POPE'S CANON LAW.—No. I.

MANY of our Roman Catholic readers are probably not aware that the Church of Rome has a canon law which all popes have thought should be in force, and be obeyed, in all Christian countries.

A free Protestant government makes it impossible for the Pope to attempt to put this law in force in Ireland just now; but his policy is to prepare for its introduction into Ireland; and even though this canon law should never come to be put in force in Ireland, yet it is deeply interesting to Roman Catholics, and to Protestants too, to know what sort of a law this canon law is, because it shows us what popes themselves consider to be the legitimate and natural consequences of their own spiritual claims, as vicars of Christ and heads of the Church.

We propose, then, to give, from time to time, some extracts from the canon law of the Church of Rome, showing the nature and foundation of that law.

We quote that law only from the books which are now held in the Roman courts as being of the highest authority in canon law. These are—The Decretals of Pope Gregory IX.; the Sixth Book of Decretals (commonly quoted as "Sext."); the Clementines (so called from Pope Clement V., who collected and authorized them); the Extravagants<sup>a</sup> of Pope John XXII.; the Common Extravagants (so called from being a collection from several popes, and not from one pope only).

We do not quote the Decretum of Gratian to establish the canon law of Rome at the present day, because Roman Catholic canonists, being ashamed of its forgeries, do now pronounce it of no authority, though, perhaps, no book ever promoted the interests of the Church of Rome more.

I.—PRIMACY OF THE POPE.

We need not quote authorities to prove that by the law of the Church of Rome, the Bishop of Rome is the head and ruler of all churches, to whom all are bound to yield obedience. It is enough to refer to the Creed of Pope Pius IV. for this:—"I acknowledge the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church as the mother and mistress of all churches; and I promise and swear true obedience to the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter Prince of Apostles, and Vicar of Jesus Christ."

<sup>a</sup> Vide Mosheim's Church History, vol. 3, p. 109 London, 1841.  
<sup>b</sup> The term "Extravagant," means, literally, "Wandering outside," and was applied to such decrees of popes, as were not previously collected into any of the authorized Books of Canon Law.

This is an article of faith with Roman Catholics. Faith must be founded on the authority of God, and not of man; therefore all Roman Catholics believe that the primacy of the bishop of Rome is of divine right—that is, that primacy over the Church was given to him by God, and not by man. This lies at the root of the whole canon law of the Church of Rome.

The following passage is the earliest authority that we can find for the primacy by divine right of the Bishops of Rome:—

"The holy Roman and Apostolic Church received the primacy, not from the Apostles, but from the Lord Himself, our Saviour. . . . This apostolic see was appointed the hinge and head of all churches by the Lord, and not by any other; and as the door is governed by the hinge, so all churches (the Lord so appointing) are governed by the authority of this Holy See."<sup>b</sup> This professes to have been written by Anacletus, who succeeded St. Clement as Bishop of Rome about the year 100. The passage, however, is not so old. It was forged in the name of Anacletus, in the eighth century, and is a portion of the forgeries of the notorious Isidore Mercator.

Yet, even so, it is the most ancient authority we can find for the supremacy, by divine right, of the See of Rome. If any Roman Catholic can send us any older authority, which declares that the primacy of the Church of Rome is of divine right, we will, of course, publish it. If no Roman Catholic can find any older authority for the divine right of the supremacy of Rome, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the claim has its origin and foundation in forgery. Still, this claim is the foundation of the Popes' canon law.

II.—TEMPORAL POWER OF THE POPE.

The doctrine that the Bishop of Rome is, by divine right, the head of the Church and the vicar of Christ on earth, naturally led to the conclusion, that all temporal rulers and powers ought to be subject to the authority of the Pope.

Various laws have been made by the Church of Rome to bring all temporal rulers under such subjection to the Pope.

On this point we quote the decree of Pope Boniface VIII., which now forms part of the canon law:—

"We are obliged by the faith to believe and to hold one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and this we firmly believe and simply confess, out of which there is no salvation, nor remission of sins. . . . And we are instructed by the word of the gospel, that in her power there are two swords, to wit, the spiritual and the temporal. For the Apostles saying, 'Here are two swords,' that is to say, in the church, when the Apostles were speaking, the Lord does not answer, 'It is too much,' but 'It is enough.' Certainly, he who denies that the temporal sword is in the power of Peter, badly attends to the word of the Lord, which sets it forth, 'Put up thy sword into the sheath.' Each, therefore, is in the power of the Church, to wit, the spiritual sword and the material sword. But the one, indeed, is to be exercised for the Church, the other by the Church. The one by the hand of the priest, the other by the hand of kings and soldiers, but at the nod and sufferance of the priest. But it is right that the one sword should be subject to the other, and that temporal authority should be subject to spiritual power.

(Pope Boniface very naturally concludes thus.) Moreover, we declare, say, define, and pronounce, that it is absolutely necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff. Given at the Lateran, in the 8th year of our Pontificate."<sup>d</sup>

Such was the law made and published by Pope Boniface. It still stands in the canon law of the Church of Rome.

The Pope does not try to enforce this law everywhere and at all times. He is too wise. But still, it is the law of the Church of Rome, and every one who acts or speaks against it is guilty of violating or opposing the law of the Church of Rome—if guilt it be to do so.

But the Pope always tries to act upon this law wherever he can; and he claims a right to do it whenever he

<sup>b</sup> Sacrosancta Romana et apostolica ecclesia non ab apostolis, sed ab ipso Domino Salvatore nostro priusatum obtinuit. . . . Hæc vero apostolica sedes cardo et caput omnium ecclesiarum a Domino, et non ab alio est constituta; et sicut cardine ostium regitur, sic hujus sanctæ sedis auctoritate omnes ecclesie (C. ultimo disponente) reguntur.—Gratian Decret. Dist. 22, c. 2. Collection of Isidore Mercator, in Merlin's Concilia, p. 17. Lubbe & Co's. Con. Gen., vol. i. 528. Ed. Par. 1871.

<sup>c</sup> Matthew xxvi. 52.

<sup>d</sup> Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam et ipsam apostolicam urgente fide credere cogimur et tenere, nosque hac firmiter credimus et simpliciter confitemur, extra quam nec salus est, nec remissio peccatorum. . . . In hac ejusque potestate duos esse gladios, spirituales, videlicet, et temporales, evangelicis dictis instrumetur. Nam dicentibus apostolis, ecce gladius duo hic, in ecclesia scilicet, quæ apostoli loquerentur, non respondit Dominus, nimis esse, sed ait. Certe qui in Potestate Petri Temporalium gladium esse negat, male verbum attendit: Domini proferentis, convertit gladium tuum in vaginam. Uterque ergo est in potestate ecclesie, spiritualis scilicet gladius, et materialis. Sed is quidem pro ecclesia, ille vero ab ecclesia exercendus. Ille sacerdotis, is manu regum et militum, sed ad auxilium et patientiam sacerdotis. Oportet autem gladium esse sub gladio, et Temporalium auctoritatem spirituali subici oportet.

Porro subeosa Romano Pontifici omni humana creatura d. claramus, dicimus, diffinimus, et pronunciamus omnino esse de necessitate salutis.—Dat. Laterani Pont. nostri Ao. viii.

Decree of Pope Boniface VIII. Extravag. commun. Lib. I, Tit. viii., c. 1.

<sup>a</sup> Tacitus, Philippe, ac tua studia cura, nec me perturba.—Corpus Reform. Tom. 1, p. 149. Vide D'Aubigne's Hist. of the Reformation, p. 169. Edinburgh, 1847.  
<sup>b</sup> Christus suus non deest.—Corpus Reform. Tom. 1, p. 104. Vide D'Aubigne, at supra, p. 126.  
<sup>c</sup> Una est scriptura, castissima spiritus, pura, et per omnia verax.—Contra Eckium Defensio. Corp. Ref. Tom. 1, p. 115.  
<sup>d</sup> Quid igitur, ipsi secum pugnant, quid mirum?—Ibid.