

The Question Solved.

CHAP. I.

PROTESTANT WRITERS AND SPEAKERS—THEIR INFLUENCE AND CHARACTER—DR. CLARK'S POSITION—CATHOLICS NOT UNBELIEVERS IN REVEALED RELIGION.

THERE is a class of public speakers, who neither impress the understanding, nor warm the affections. They may polish off a sentence and round a period with much eloquence, but watch them closely and you cannot fail to discover considerable straining after popularity. In seeking reputation in this way, more especially when they undertake to discuss the Catholic question, their love of display carries them so far beyond themselves, that they forget all their obligations to truth. Their conceptions of common sense are at times so low, that they seem to lose the proper use of

their faculties. Instead of bread, they give us a stone; and for a fish, they hand us a serpent. By their much talking, they remind one of the citizens of Plato's commonwealth—capable of controlling every thing, but performing nothing. Their work is done like their preaching—on paper. To this class Dr. Clark properly belongs. Take Protestant ministers generally, and their logic, not to mention their theology, is the flimsiest in existence. Their preaching is a mixture of Christianity, infidelity, and sophistry. Unscrupulous in their attacks against the Church of Christ, they show a vindictive spirit akin to the arch enemy of souls. Nothing is right but what they dictate, and nothing true but what tallies with their narrow, perverted notions. If you speak of a holy office in God's Church, which tends to soothe and comfort the sinner, they shout with holy horror, "Popish invention; false doctrine," etc. If a Catholic artist, full of faith and devotion to his church, transfers to the

canvas his conception of some religious idea, or historic event, he is hounded down as an enemy to moral instruction, and contributor to idolatry; while the gross conceptions of Greece and Pagan Rome, or the more modern work of the great *unknown*—the "Cardiff Giant," is lauded to the skies. They are so accustomed to look upon things which we hold to be true and edifying, through a distorted vision, that they can hardly distinguish a prism of light and shade from a lump of charcoal. The beauties of Catholic worship, the grandeur of Catholic architecture, the magnificence of Catholic painting and Catholic music, are to them blemishes, useless and unbecoming, because above their capacities. They remind me of the man who got angry at the Creator, because in some parts of the heavens he placed more stars than in others. If a poor Catholic should excel his fellows in virtue and holiness, they will attribute his devotion, not to the grace of God, working in his soul, but to some

superstitious or selfish motive. In this way, and by such teaching, Protestants grow up like poisonous weeds, with the spirit of evil continually gnawing at their hearts; while their ministers, with tongues of serpents, keep on distilling venom and malice from Sunday to Sunday, which they infuse into the minds of their hearers, thus fostering hatred toward a class of their fellow-citizens, who never did them wrong. They grudge us the sun by day, and the moon by night, and would poison the very air we breathe, if they had the power, and it would not injure themselves. Dioclesian and Tiberius possessed this spirit; such was the conduct of Cain when he killed his brother; and wicked men in all ages have cherished such feelings. Many even went so far as to make goblets of the skulls of their victims (who were their supposed enemies), out of which they became drunk with revenge, as did the monster Albonus.

Now, the great oracle of the Dutch

Church would have his people believe that Catholics are the enemies of all that is good and noble in this life or the life to come. This *Christian teacher* is wofully ignorant as regards this subject, or else a wicked perverter of what he knows to be true. We cannot excuse him on the plea of ignorance, for, by his style of preaching, we should judge that he has made the short-comings of Catholics a greater study than the spiritual necessities of his flock; and, besides, how could a Protestant D. D. be ignorant of the faith and practice of Christian sects? Did he not study his Bible in the common schools, those great fountains of inspiration, the bulwarks of the State and the milestones on the high road to liberty and progress? We must, therefore, accuse him of forgery, black and offensive, full of malice, jealousy and revenge. The Catholic Church defines it to be a sin against the Holy Ghost to impugn the known truth by arguing obstinately against points of faith and holy practices,

or to prevent the way of our Lord, by forging lies against Catholics and slandering the Church of Christ, as heretics and infidels do.

Dr. Clark, in his preaching, or, more properly, prating, reminds one of the handle of a jug: he is all on one side. He claims all the virtues, all the learning, wisdom, and progress of the age; his people are the salt of the earth, and the First Church, although it stands in a hollow, he places on the top of Mount Zion. Happy people! thrice happy Doctor!

I would not be surprised if, some bright morning or other, we should see the learned Doctor, trumpet in hand, proclaiming aloud at the corner of Van Schaack and North Pearl streets, "We are the chosen of Israel, the Lord's anointed; we love God and our neighbor as ourselves; we are as full of intelligence, moral worth, and good will to men, as ever we can hold! Come this way, all ye people in search of salvation, and I will show you more big I's in this congre-

gation of ours than you ever saw before! Be careful! would ye go near the whore of Babylon? Hearken not to Anti-Christ, or the scarlet lady! Beware of Popery, and the superstition, ignorance, and idolatry of Catholics! Listen well! don't you hear the old Pope and his seven hundred bishops forging chains this very instant, to bind the American people hand and foot! Keep out of the way of all those Catholic priests, although one of them performs more ministerial duties in a day than I do in a month, and makes more converts from Protestantism to Rome in one year, than I have from Popery since I received my ordination, from a man who never received proper authority to ordain me! Come in here, all you staunch nativists, and hear me handle the subject of the Bible and Common Schools! Father Ludden has gone to Rome, that wicked old city, where the people are all as ignorant as stuffed pigs; he will not be here to bring us to an account for bad logic and inconsistency in matters

pertaining to the public weal! He took up the cudgel once before against four of us, *Christian giants*, as we are, and, like a true Irishman, knocked us clean out of time! So, come in here, I say, and we will have a good time by ourselves; we will clap our hands together, stuff our people with all manner of accusations, rash judgments, and lies, to sustain our cause, and the members of our conventicle will retire to their homes, satisfied that a second Paul has arisen in the person of I, Rufus W. Clark, D. D., once a Congregationalist, but now a Reformed Dutch Protestant!"

If Rufus W. Clark will stand up in his pulpit, like an honest man, and argue out the questions which divide Catholics and Protestants, in a generous, logical manner, throw aside prejudice and ill-will, speak respectfully of those who entertain opinions contrary to his own, and prove that the 250,000,000 Catholics are all in the wrong, and a handful of Dutch Reformed Protestants all in the right, I, for one, will

extend to him my most sincere thanks. Can he put his finger on the first article of Christian faith, necessary to salvation, that the Roman Catholic disbelieves? He proclaims to his congregation that the Pope is the foe of God, that all Catholics are idolaters, and classes them with atheists, infidels, and unbelievers of every shade. Good kind and amiable pastor, you remind me of a man who was in the habit of getting drunk. Coming to the door of his dwelling, he would stand upon the threshold, and seeing his wife sober and industrious, attending to her domestic duties, he would call out to her, "You're drunk;" "go to bed;" "you ought to be ashamed of yourself, you good for nothing;" and if the poor thing would reply in justification of herself, and point out his sin and folly, he would knock her down, and then kick her because she fell.

Again, Protestants, after abusing us and taunting us with ignorance, irreligion and every other foul epithet, will turn round

and tell us they did it for our good and lasting happiness, and because they love our souls. Yes! they love our souls as the wicked young man loved his mother, who, on becoming enraged at her, determined to do her violence, but ashamed to do it in an ungracious manner, he caught her in his arms, crying out, "Mother, I love you; Mother, I love you," and squeezed, and squeezed until he broke her ribs. I can see how an Infidel or a Free-thinker can war against us, but how a man claiming to be a minister of Christ can accuse us of being hostile to the interests of God and man, is more than I can well conceive, unless Satan is his master, instead of Jesus.

This Evangelical teacher, with a most brazen effrontery, proclaims from his pulpit that the Catholic has no true faith, but is a slavish adherent to what his priest imposes upon him; and he observes no obligation save that which corresponds to the slavery, degradation and craft of Rome. Let me as-

sure the good people of the First Reformed Church (a title, it seems to me, very much out of place at this period of the Christian Era) that Catholics are not as ignorant of what pertains to their salvation, as their pastor would have them believe; and although a large number of them do not study their Bible as Protestants do, nevertheless they know the duties of a Christian, and should any of them stray away from their faith, and pursue a course of sin and shame, the fault does not lie at the door of our Holy Church, or at the feet of our pastors and teachers.

"Faith is a gift of God, or a supernatural quality infused by God into the soul, by which we firmly believe all those things which he hath in any way revealed to us; and without faith it is impossible to please God." This every Catholic child learns as soon as he comes to the use of reason. He is also taught that faith alone will not save him, without good works, and that he must observe the precepts of God and His

Church. He learns that the Old and New Testaments are the works of divine inspiration, and a precious legacy left to God's Holy Church, full of instruction, replete with wisdom and sublime thought. He believes also that the Holy and Apostolic Church and its ministers are the only true and reliable interpreters of the sacred volume. Every Catholic child is taught to believe that there is but one God, who created the heavens and the earth, out of nothing and by His word only — that He created man to his own image and likeness, giving him will, memory and understanding — that the object of man's creation was that he might know, love and serve God in this life, and be happy with Him in the next. He is also required to know that in this one God there are three distinct persons — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that God the Son, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, came down from heaven, in the person of Jesus Christ, to redeem man from the dominion of sin,

to which he became subject through the violation of God's holy law. The Catholic fully believes in the death and resurrection of that same Jesus, and that He shall come again, at the last day, to judge the world — that the good shall possess the Kingdom of Heaven, and the wicked be banished forever from the presence of God. He also believes that the Holy Ghost, or the third person of the Trinity, is equal with the Father and the Son, and that He descended upon the Apostles, in the form of tongues of fire, to strengthen them to preach the Gospel and plant the Church. He believes, too, all the articles contained in the Apostles' creed, in all the commandments of God, and the precepts of His Holy Church; and that the Catholic Church is none other than that self-same institution, established by the Apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Now, if she is not that Church of which St. Peter was the visible head, will Dr. Clark be kind enough to tell us which is?

What other church has come down to us by perpetual succession, if it be not the Catholic Church, through which our bishops, priests, and other holy persons receive doctrine, orders, and power to teach and perform religious duties, for the edification and spiritual comfort of God's poor?

Catholics love their Church because they believe it to be God's kingdom on earth, and receive with submission whatever she proposes to their belief, because she is the pillar and ground of truth, and cannot err in what she teaches. They know that Christ gave the promise to St. Peter, the first Pope and Bishop of Rome, that the gates of hell should not prevail against His Church, that the Holy Ghost should bestow on her all truth, and that He himself would forever abide with her.

Ours is not a faith given to speculation or to doubt—such a faith is worse than none at all. The spirit of speculation in matters of religion, is no more to be compared to that warm, living, active faith of

Catholics, than the song of "Jim along Josey," is to the Psalms of David! I would as soon trust Dagon on the ark of God, as to trust the private interpretation of the Scriptures to save my soul. This jumbling together of individual notions and opinions, and calling it Christianity, is as ridiculous as to affirm that a child's kaleidoscope is the meridian sun. But Dr. Clark says, we are the foes of God, enemies of Christianity, and know nothing of Christ and His divine attributes. Thank you, Reverend Sir, for the high opinion you entertain of us; but look out! we warn you of the wrath to come, when every liar shall have his portion in the "lake that burns with brimstone and with fire!"