

"...The *spurious liberality* of the day we live in helps on the *Romeward tendency*. It is fashionable now to say that all sects should be equal, that all creeds should be regarded with equal favor and respect, and that there is a substratum of *common truth* at the bottom of all kinds of religion, whether Buddhism, Mohammadanism or Christianity! The consequence is that myriads of ignorant folks begin to think there is nothing peculiarly dangerous in the tenets of papists — any more than in the tenets of Methodists, Independents, Presbyterians or Baptists, and that we ought to let Romanism alone, and never expose its unscriptural and Christ-dishonoring character.

The consequences of this changed tone of feeling, I am bold to say, will be most disastrous and mischievous, unless it can be checked. Once let popery get her foot again on the neck of England — and there will be an end of all our national greatness! God will forsake us, and we shall sink to the level of Portugal and Spain!

With Bible reading discouraged,
with private judgment forbidden,
with the way to Christ's cross narrowed or blocked up,
with priestcraft re-established,
with auricular confession set up in every parish,
with monasteries and nunneries dotted over the land,
with women everywhere kneeling like serfs and slaves at the feet of clergymen,
with schools and colleges made seminaries of Jesuitism,
with free thought denounced and anathematized,
with all these things — the distinctive manliness and independence of the British character will gradually dwindle, wither, pine away and be destroyed, and England will be ruined! And all these things, I firmly believe, will come unless the old feeling about the value of Protestantism can be revived.

I warn all who read this message, and I warn my fellow churchmen in particular, that the times require you to awake and be on your guard. Beware of Romanism, and beware of any religious teaching which, wittingly or unwittingly, paves the way to it. I beseech you to realize the painful fact that the Protestantism of this country is gradually ebbing away, and I entreat you, as Christians and patriots to resist the growing tendency to forget the blessings of the English Reformation.

For Christ's sake, for the sake of the Church of England, for the sake of our country, for the sake of our children — let us not drift back to Roman Catholic ignorance, superstition,

priestcraft and immorality! Our fathers tried Popery long ago, for centuries, and threw it off at last with disgust and indignation. Let us not turn the clock back and return to *Egypt*. Let us have **no peace with Rome** — until Rome abjures her errors, and is at peace with Christ. Until Rome does that, the vaunted reunion of Western churches, which some talk of, and press upon our notice, is an insult to Christianity.

Read your Bibles and store your minds with scriptural arguments. A Bible-reading laity is a nation's surest defense against error....

I entreat my readers, beside the Bible and Articles — to read history, and see what Rome did in days gone by. Read how she trampled on liberties, plundered your forefathers pockets, and kept the whole nation of England ignorant, superstitious and immoral....

And do not forget that *Rome never changes*. It is her boast and glory that she is *infallible*, and *always the same*.

Read facts, standing out at this minute on the face of the globe, if you will not read history. What has made Italy and Sicily what they were until very lately? Popery. What has made the South American states what they are? Popery. What has made Spain and Portugal what they are? Popery. What has made Ireland what she is in Munster, Leinster and Connaught? Popery. What makes Scotland, the United States, and our own beloved England the powerful, prosperous countries they are, and I pray God they may long continue? I answer, unhesitatingly, Protestantism, a *free Bible* and the principles of the Reformation. Oh, think twice before you cast aside the principles of the Reformation! Think twice before you give way to the prevailing tendency to favor popery and go back to Rome!

The Reformation . . .

found Englishmen steeped in ignorance — and left them in possession of knowledge;

found them without Bibles — and placed a Bible in every parish;

found them in darkness — and left them in comparative light;

found them priest-ridden — and left them enjoying the liberty which Christ bestows;

found them strangers to the blood of atonement, to faith and grace and real holiness — and left them with the key to these things in their hands;

found them blind — and left them seeing,

found them slaves — and left them free!

Forever let us thank God for the Reformation! It lighted a candle which we ought never to

allow to be extinguished or to burn dim. Surely I have a right to say that the times require of us a renewed sense of the *evils of Romanism*, and of the enormous value of the Protestant Reformation!”

-J.C. Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties and Roots* (1879).

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