

**ROMANISM
INCOMPATIBLE
WITH REPUBLICAN
INSTITUTIONS**

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Romanism Incompatible with Republican Institutions by Civis

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CIVIS

**ROMANISM
INCOMPATIBLE
WITH REPUBLICAN
INSTITUTIONS**

PREMIUM TREATISE.

ROMANISM

INCOMPATIBLE WITH

REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS

BY CIVIS, *penit.*

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The undersigned, having been appointed for that purpose, have examined the Essays which have been submitted for their inspection, upon the theme proposed by the American Protestant Society. Twelve Essays have been submitted to them, four of which possess great merit. They have unanimously awarded the premium to the paper marked No. V., and which is entitled by the author,—“*ROMANISM INCOMPATIBLE WITH REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS.*”

The author is desirous of withholding his name, but remarks in a note addressed to the Committee, that should his production be entitled to their approbation, the premium will be called for in such a manner as to leave no doubt of the identity of the claimant with CIVIS.

GARDINER SPRING, }
THOMAS DE WITT, } *Committee*
THOMAS E. BOND, }

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ROMANISM

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CHAPTER I.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF PAPAL ROME.

THE subject proposed for this essay involves principles vital to the welfare of every age and country. Religious belief is implanted in the nature of man. It is the only bond that connects him with the skies. The needs of the body, its pains and even its pleasures perpetually remind him that he is born of earth, and must return whence he came ; but this feeling assures him that, in part at least, he may claim a nobler origin and more important destiny. It is the impulse of an immortal and imprisoned spirit, a yearning after the freedom of a higher world. The vice and barbarism of a people will not destroy it ; they may oppress it with the most senseless and fantastic ceremonies, they may stifle it beneath cruel rights and degrading customs, but it will still exist ; they can never eradicate it. That nation has not been known which was destitute of all traces

of religious belief and worship; and in proportion as these have been elevated or debased, national character, social and political regulations have felt their influence for good or for evil. The religions of the old world, from the national ritual of the Jews to the languid, indifferent spirit of paganism, have stamped their followers with an impress which has ceased to exist only with their political existence. The former it has bound together by ties, which distance, neither of time nor place could sunder; it has preserved their hereditary character and kept them a nation amid the nations, without laws, without the bond of a common language, peculiar and alike, in all climates and under all circumstances of degradation. The influence of the Papal religion also, sinking as it has with every century deeper and deeper in corruption, is too evident in the history of the past for us to undervalue its importance. But the eye of an observer may see its tendency in its spirit. He need not wait for the deductions of experience but may draw, *a priori*, the most valid conclusions from a glance at the nature and purpose of its institutions.

The pure and simple religion, taught by the Saviour and spread abroad by the mission of his apostles, did not long remain uncorrupted. For not more than two centuries did christianity exist in its original purity. The introduction of rank among the clergy, whatever may be the opinion as to its usefulness in maintaining order and enforcing discipline, was certainly cal-

culated to excite in the bosom of aspirants a passion which of all others is most at variance with the precepts of the gospel. As the wealth of the church increased, a distinction of office brought with it a distinction of power; Ecclesiastical rank was endowed with more than spiritual authority. The purer manners of the earlier bishops, in their successors degenerated into licence; and the ambition to wield the revenues of the more opulent sees gave rise to shameful disorders.

With the conversion of Constantine, christianity became the religion of the state; and as a result of this unholy union a train of evils was introduced into the bosom of the church which speaks with a voice of warning to the world. With the simplicity, the sincerity and charity of religion seemed also to perish. Its vitality was oppressed with a burden of pride and vain display; and the doctrines of the apostles, good will and love to men, were no longer practised by those who claimed authority as their successors. Heresies raged with unexampled violence; and in punishing and repressing schism the christians forgot the persecutions they had so lately suffered, or remembered the lesson only to practise it against their erring brethren. It is a melancholy trait in the character of man, that with power he almost necessarily loses a true sense of his duties and of the rights of his fellows. When at a distance he desires it perhaps only for a good end; but as if its very possession tarnished the

purity of the soul, when attained, he exercises it with a far different purpose. Supreme goodness alone is able to withstand the corrupting influence of supreme authority.

But with the principles of the gospel the christians seem also to have forgotten those of worldly prudence. They stood in the presence of an alert and dexterous enemy. The ancient religion of Rome, though it had lost the favour of the emperor was not abolished, nor indeed, greatly oppressed. A large portion of the senate with many of the learned and noble still adhered to the faith of their ancestors; and the disorders of the church afforded to their philosophers an ample theme for scandal and rebuke. Heathenism reared its head again for a time under Julian, but the life of that emperor was too short to nourish its aged frame into strength. Its final overthrow however was retarded for more than half a century, when, under the reign of Theodosius it was completely destroyed. The severities of persecution which had already been ingrafted upon the church were ready to enforce the edicts of the emperor and the zeal of the clergy; but Paganism was of a nature too yielding to offer an obstinate resistance. The spirit of martyrdom was foreign to it. Its hold upon the hearts and minds of its votaries was too weak to inspire that enthusiastic devotion which raises its possessor above every fear.

A few philosophers, a few interested magistrates lamented its approaching downfall; the