

**ROMAN
CATHOLICISM IN
THE UNITED STATES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649694860

Roman Catholicism in the United States by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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UNITED STATES.

*"The Church of Rome,
Mixing two governments that ill assort,
Hath missed her footing, fallen into the mire,
And there herself and burden much defiled."*

DANTE.

*"Popery is a double thing to deal with, and claims a twofold power,
ecclesiastical and political, both usurped, and the one supporting the
other."—MILTON.*



NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY
NEW YORK

THE AUTHORS' PUBLISHING COMPANY

1879

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old Feb. 19/13. \$1.25c

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CHAPTER I.

STATEMENT OF THE SUBJECT.

WITHOUT wishing to revive those religious prejudices and animosities which have been productive of so much harm in the past, I cannot help thinking that the time has come when we ought to turn our attention to Roman Catholicism, and, in the light of a candid examination, endeavor to estimate as intelligently as possible the consequences which are likely to result from its increasing power and influence in this country.

Commencing our examination of the subject under a due sense of that liberal spirit of the present day which has considerably modified what are commonly known as religious differ-

ences, it may seem useless to devote any time to the discussion of a question so apparently unimportant as the growth of a religious denomination.

But unnecessary as the examination into religious differences is on general principles, there is in the present instance a deep foundation in fact for the discussion. Within certain limits it is undoubtedly safe to leave differences of religious belief to take care of themselves. But we sadly misunderstand the laws of human development if we suppose that a vast and overshadowing system like Roman Catholicism can be safely passed by in silence and unconcern. What applies to doctrinal differences among Christians does not apply to Roman Catholicism. In point of fact, the Roman Catholic Church aims at a spiritual and temporal sovereignty which separates it in kind no less than in degree from other bodies of the Christian faith. Recognizing no equal, and regarding all forms of Protestantism as so many phases of infidelity, Roman Catholicism comes before us, not as a system claiming to be approved according to its merits, but as a system claiming to be on all subjects a supreme and infallible judge. To

regard its growth in the same manner as we regard the growth of the different Protestant churches, is to fall into a fatal error. As far as the interests of modern civilization are concerned, it is a matter of small consequence whether the Episcopalians, the Methodists, the Presbyterians, or the Baptists are in the ascendancy.

But the case is very different with Roman Catholicism. From the nature of its principles, and the imperious character of its claims, Roman Catholicism is separated from other religious denominations in a manner so clear and unmistakable as to show at once the absurdity of attempting to apply to it the same method of treatment.

As Milton said of it, "Popery is a double thing to deal with, and claims a twofold power, ecclesiastical and political, both usurped, and the one supporting the other."

And yet manifest as are the dangers consequent on the growth of Romanism, we have somehow fallen into a state of torpor which, if allowed to continue, will surely end in the most disastrous consequences.

Grossly deceiving ourselves as to the influence which Roman Catholicism is capable of exerting on our national life, we have shut our eyes to facts, and for a healthy liberality have substituted supineness and a false sense of security. Of course, we are, from the nature of our institutions, bound to respect the rights of Roman Catholics, and to allow them full liberty of worship.

Heaven forbid that we should ever descend to those depths of religious bigotry which have stained the records of other nations. But in order that we may realize the dangers attending the present growth of Romanism, it is by no means necessary that we should degenerate into bigotry or ignorant prejudice. To any one who studies the spirit of our institutions it is obvious that the narrowness of bigotry is utterly incompatible with those broad and comprehensive principles which form the very bases of our national existence.

Let us in every possible way eschew bigotry. But in doing so, let us remember that this does not necessarily involve the abandonment of certain questions which are inseparably connected

with our responsibilities as a nation. As the Rev. Hugh Miller Thompson has forcibly remarked in his introduction to Mr. Gladstone's essay on "Italy and Her Church:" "That a man is a citizen prevents not that he be also a Christian or an Infidel, a Roman Catholic or a Protestant; and if he be a genuine Christian or a genuine Infidel, a real Roman Catholic or a real Protestant, the fact will work itself out in his citizenship. . . . Vaticanism is alive in America as in Europe. It has just crowned its American hierarchy with the gift of a red hat to a gentleman of singular modesty and good sense. It has chosen shrewdly, as it always does in such cases. Our first American 'Prince of the Church' does not frighten the most jealous Republican. This is as it should be. We must be accustomed slowly to the ideas involved in the gift." Above and beyond what are commonly regarded as the formative principles of our national life, there are invisible spiritual forces which we cannot safely omit in framing our estimate of the present, and in making our calculations for the future. And it is precisely in this connection that the present growth of