

# THE PINCHING OF PROTESTANTISM

*If only you had heeded my commands your peace would have flowed like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Your offspring would have been like the sand, your descendants as many as its grains; their name never cut off or blotted out from before me.*

Isaiah 48: 18-19

The name, 'Protestantism', is derived from a written objection, a *Letter of Protestation*, against the decree of the second Diet of Speyer (19<sup>th</sup> April, 1529), the formal assembly of German rulers seeking to maintain a regime of order in the civil chaos precipitated by Luther's revolt against the Catholic Church. At the urging of the Emperor, Charles V (through his brother, Ferdinand), the majority present re-affirmed the decree of the Edict of Worms (25<sup>th</sup> May 1521) against Luther and his followers except where 'the new teaching had been introduced and could not be abolished without notable revolt, trouble and danger', but declared that even in those areas there was to be no interference with the saying of the Mass.

On the same day, 19<sup>th</sup> April, the Landgrave Phillip of Hesse and five other German princes with the representatives of some fourteen German cities issued their formal written *Protestation* against the Diet decree. They affirmed their right to answer to God alone for what concerned 'God's honour and the salvation... of the souls of each one of us'. They expanded on this the following day declaring that the Mass would not be said in *their* dominions. "We hold your resolution null and not binding and we desire in matters of religion... so to live, govern and carry ourselves, in our governments as also with and among our subjects and kinsfolk, as we trust to answer for it before God." On 22<sup>nd</sup> April several of the contributors made a secret agreement of mutual armed resistance to any attack by Catholics or adherents of the imperial authority. Phillip of Hesse published the *Protestation* on 5<sup>th</sup> May following.<sup>1</sup>

The title labelled the thing well. Protestantism was not something positive, but something negative. Its essence was objection to the regime and order established throughout Europe for the best part of nine centuries, civil rule in the various nations of the Continent operating under the overarching religious direction of God's Holy Church. Luther's doctrine did not mark the emergence of something precious, hidden for long ages, but the revolt of Catholic against Catholic, of Catholics against Catholicism. It would better have been termed 'Mutineerism', or 'Rebellionism', but 'Protestantism' serves.

State and Church were united before Luther's revolt and, despite the failures of weak sovereigns and the disruptions to civil life from human venality and concupiscence, that union served the peoples of those nations admirably, for it provided an avenue of appeal from the excesses of their rulers. No matter how

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation*, J M Dent & Sons, London, 1961, (translated by Audrey Butler from the French of the author's *Une Revolution Religieuse: la Reforme Protestante*, Paris, 1958), pp. 317-8; G. R. Elton, *Reformation Europe 1517-1559*, Fontana, London, 1963, pp. 64-5; Warren H. Carroll, *The Cleaving of Christendom*, Christendom Press, Front Royal, 2000, p. 96.

mighty a prince or baron might be, there existed something mightier, the rule of morals established by Almighty God and administered by His Holy Church. Henry II's humiliation for contriving the death of his Archbishop of Canterbury stood as a standard for all the princes of Christendom. No ruler could remain a tyrant while the ministers of the Church exercised their responsibilities. It was inevitable then, that Luther's counterpart in England, King Henry VIII, would desecrate the grave of the great Thomas of Canterbury. In September 1538, he had his remains dug up and scattered. He removed his name and his feast from the English Church's calendar, had him declared a traitor and ordered all his statues throughout the realm destroyed. He took a ruby the size of a man's thumb which adorned St Thomas's shrine, and put it on his own hand.<sup>2</sup>

Amongst the adherents of Protestantism some are closer to, some further from, the mind of the Catholic Church. But all suffer from Protestantism's defining characteristic, objection to the regime and order established by Almighty God. Whether in its older guises—Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Congregationalism, Presbyterianism, Methodism, or the cult of the Baptists—or in the newer fundamentalist evangelical types derived from American Baptists, it is pervaded by this spirit of objection. One convert from Protestantism described the attitude with the mnemonic ABC—"anything but Catholic". Whatever its type, Protestantism is pinched and niggardly; starved of the elements of life; deprived of the freedom that characterises the sons of God. Belloc marked its contrast with Catholicism in his *Letter to Dean Inge* when he said that the Dean of St Paul's was—

"like one examining the windows of Chartres from within by candle-light, and marvelling how any man can find glory in them..."<sup>3</sup>

Protestantism is rooted in compromise. Many, if not most, of the followers of the older Protestant sects have drifted from positions of morality they held as rigorously as did (and as does still) the Catholic Church to the point where they hardly differ from the new pagans, the secular humanists. Among the newer types the compromise is built into their beliefs. How many, for instance, of those politicians in favour of *in vitro* fertilisation of human embryos, or those who voted recently to systematise this abuse in stem cell research or experimental cloning would not profess to be members of one or other Protestant sect? Aware of this persistent drift of Protestantism from principle, Chesterton remarked early in the twentieth century, "We are living on our Catholic capital, and it is rapidly running down."

Protestantism cannot be understood unless it is seen for what it is—the perversion of something original and good. It is a heresy, the obstinate denial by the baptised of

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<sup>2</sup> William Cobbett, *A History of the Protestant Reformation in England and Ireland*, Benzinger Bros. New York, 1896, pp. 134-5. Warren H. Carroll, *The Cleaving of Christendom*, op. cit., p. 175. The Feast of St Thomas a' Becket falls each year on 29<sup>th</sup> December. In his *Ceremony of Carols*, Benjamin Britten makes use of an ancient anonymous Christmas carol, *Wolcum Yole*, one of whose stanzas runs: 'Wolcum be ye Stevene and Jon, Wolcum innocentes every one, Wolcum Thomas marter one...' It obviously predates Henry's desecration.

<sup>3</sup> *Essays of a Catholic*, London, 1931. See [http://www.superflumina.org/belloc\\_inge.html](http://www.superflumina.org/belloc_inge.html) for the full text of the letter.

a truth which God has established, a truth which is to be believed with divine and Catholic faith.<sup>4</sup> Like all heresies, Protestantism is gnostic. Its adherents are possessed of a higher knowledge: they know better than God and His Holy Church! Protestantism is an evil thing: it has—*it always has had*—evil effects.

While Lutheranism favoured the pretensions of kings, Calvinism, on the other hand, with its denial of royal supremacy and its republican spirit, was of service in what may be described as the anti-monarchical, or anti-imperial, struggle of the Swiss and the people of the Netherlands. In England Henry VIII regarded the Papal supremacy as an obstacle to his lust and rapacity, and used the great power of the crown to effect a schism. During the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth, the doctrines of Luther and Calvin were introduced so that, by a complete separation from Rome in obedience and faith, all foreign interference in the affairs of the kingdom might be permanently excluded.

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The following are the chief tenets of Luther:

- (1) The Bible privately interpreted is the sole rule of faith.
- (2) Man is made holy by faith alone without good works. His soul is always in the state of sin: faith does not remove sin, but merely hides it from the eyes of God. Man's will is not free.
- (3) The Church is invisible (consisting of the just alone), although individual congregations are visible. All believers are equally priests, and need no special spiritual power to act as pastors or presbyters. The State has supreme power in all church appointments.
- (4) There are three sacraments, viz., Baptism, Eucharist, and Penance, but they do not confer grace in the Catholic sense.

Calvin (1509-1564) agreed with Luther as to (1), but added to (2) that man is predestined by God, independently of his own acts, to salvation or perdition. He also held that (3) the Church is visible (but there is also an invisible church consisting of the elect alone), and independent of the State. Presbyters elected by the people thereby receive the spiritual authority of bishops. (4) the Lutheran list of sacraments must be reduced to two, viz., Baptism and the Eucharist.

It would be impossible to give a brief and clear account of all the extraordinary transformations through which Protestant doctrine has passed from its origin down to the present time. A great number of German Lutherans now hold that Christ founded no Church, that religious belief is a matter of private opinion, or sentiment, and may be quite false. The Church of England is, in the main, liberal or rationalist (Broad Church). It downplays or rejects the supernatural (the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation, the inspiration of the Bible, etc.). A small section of its members (the High Church or ritualist party) copies the ceremonies of the Catholic Church. While some High Church Anglicans hold almost all the doctrines of Catholicism, except the Primacy and the Infallibility of the Pope, others are frankly rationalist. The Evangelical or Low Church party professes a mild form of Calvinism.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church ('CCC'), n. 2089; Code of Canon Law ('CIC'), can. 751.

<sup>5</sup> Archbishop Michael Sheehan, *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine*, revised edition by Fr Peter Joseph, London, 2001, pp. 151-2

Now, it will be objected that the assertion that Protestantism is an evil thing is far fetched and wrong. Many will point to the good done by individual Protestants, to the institutional benefits brought to those nations in which the Protestant ethic is established, even to the fact that Protestantism has been the source of innumerable converts back to Catholicism. There is no doubt that good effects have occurred, that a certain order has been preserved, or that nations have flourished under one form or another of Protestantism. But that good, that order, that growth, have each occurred not because of Protestantism, but *in spite of* it. The good is attributable, not to Protestantism—that negative, limiting, restrictive, thing—but to the universal principle of good, of order and of fecundity, Almighty God. The means he has chosen for its engendering is his Church. The good is attributable, then, to the hidden and enduring underlay in these Protestant societies of Catholicism.

One may illustrate this from the literature of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The charity of Samuel Pickwick towards his destitute erstwhile enemy, Alfred Jingle<sup>6</sup>; the nobility of Fitzwilliam D'Arcy in accepting his humiliation at the hands of the plain speaking Elizabeth Bennet<sup>7</sup>; the conversion of heart of Silas Marner in finding himself the adoptive parent of a little girl<sup>8</sup>—these characterisations of virtue, despite their presentation in Protestant settings, reflect Catholic, not Protestant values. When Scrooge on his conversion from miserliness at the hands of Dickens' benevolent ghosts, says, "I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year"<sup>9</sup>, he is expressing the Catholic mind, not a Protestant one.

Johann Sebastian Bach applied his majestic polyphony and counterpoint to sacred music ostensibly according to the teachings of Martin Luther. But it was God, his Creator and Saviour, Bach was honouring, not the distortions of his revelation effected by the heretic. Bach's endeavours reached their apogee in *Ebarne Dich*, his presentation of the Apostle Peter's lament over his betrayal of Our Blessed Lord in the *St Matthew Passion*<sup>10</sup>. This heartfelt expression of contrition, capable of moving even the Godless to tears, is a Catholic, not a Lutheran, thing. When Sir Kenneth Clark sought to illustrate Bach's music for his television series, *Civilisation*, he chose the interior not of a Lutheran, but of a Catholic church, the *Vierzehnheiligen*, the Pilgrimage Church of the Fourteen Auxiliary Saints, built in Bamberg between 1743 and 1772 by Balthasar Neumann.<sup>11</sup> A good argument could be mounted that Bach's majestic music provided an escape from the Protestant strictures on visual imagery.

The virtues, like all good things, come from God and the grace that elicits them in the individual soul is dispensed through the instrument of *his* choosing. That instrument is the Catholic Church. The means whereby the Church invokes his

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<sup>6</sup> In Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*.

<sup>7</sup> In Jane Austen's *Pride And Prejudice*.

<sup>8</sup> In George Eliot's *Silas Marner*.

<sup>9</sup> *A Christmas Carol*, Stave 4.

<sup>10</sup> Aria n. 47.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. BBC DVD *Civilisation: A Personal View by Lord Clark—The Complete Series*; (originally transmitted in the UK between 23<sup>rd</sup> March and 18<sup>th</sup> May 1969), Disc 3, n.9, "The Pursuit of Happiness".

graces is the Mass, the sacramental re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, that mystery repeated throughout the world day after day in all the halls of the Catholic Church down the long ages of time since Christ's Resurrection. The Church is that *Thing* (as Belloc called it) which alone in the world has the power to dispense God's gifts of grace. Of itself fecund and flourishing, it alone is able to save men—all men if they will heed it—from the fires of Hell. *It*, and *It* alone, can lead to virtue for *It* alone is the instrument whose end is union with God in Heaven.<sup>12</sup>

Chesterton remarked in *Orthodoxy*—

“The modern world is not evil; in some ways the modern world is far too good. It is full of wild and wasted virtues. When a religious scheme is shattered (as Christianity was shattered at the Reformation), it is not merely the vices that are let loose. The vices are, indeed, let loose, and they wander and do damage. But the virtues are let loose also; and the virtues wander more wildly, and the virtues do more terrible damage. The modern world is full of the old Christian virtues gone mad. The virtues have gone mad because they have been isolated from each other and are wandering alone.

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“Thus some scientists care for truth; and their truth is pitiless. Thus some humanitarians only care for pity; and their pity (I am sorry to say) is often untruthful... A man was meant to be doubtful about himself, but undoubting about the truth; this has been exactly reversed. Nowadays the part of a man that a man does assert is exactly the part he ought not to assert—himself. The part he doubts is exactly the part he ought not to doubt—the Divine Reason.”<sup>13</sup>

One has only to think of the ‘humility’ of Dickens’ Uriah Heep<sup>14</sup>, of the ‘forbearance’ of George Eliot’s Dr Casaubon<sup>15</sup>, of the ‘economy’ of Jane Austen’s Mrs Norris<sup>16</sup> or her Mrs John Dashwood<sup>17</sup>, to see characterised in Protestant fiction virtue isolated, virtue gone mad, working more harm than any vice. Dickens is the master of the parody of Protestant ‘virtue’. Thus, Miss Monflathers, the proprietress of a seminary for Protestant young ladies in Dicken’s *The Old Curiosity Shop*, condemns an act of charity by one of her girls as opposed to ‘a becoming pride’ and teaches its condemnation as a duty to her young charges.<sup>18</sup> Such ‘virtue’ is, of course, a betrayal of the reality the word signifies, *power for good*.

The virtues are like a quiver of arrows; they operate in company: the virtues are like voices in choir; they are always in harmony. Virtue is not virtue unless surrounded by its sisters and crowned by the queen of all the virtues, charity. The

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<sup>12</sup> God is the founder of the Catholic Church; God, Jesus Christ, is its head; God, the Holy Spirit, is its enlivening soul; God is its reason for existence, and union with God is the end of all its instrumentality in the lives of men.

<sup>13</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, Ch. III, The Suicide of Thought, London, 1908; my edition, Fontana, 1963, at pp. 30-1.

<sup>14</sup> In *David Copperfield*.

<sup>15</sup> In *Middlemarch*.

<sup>16</sup> In *Mansfield Park*.

<sup>17</sup> In *Sense & Sensibility*.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. chapter 31.

virtues grow together, says St Thomas, like the fingers of the hand. If one virtue be stunted, they all are stunted. If I appear charitable, but am in fact venal and avaricious, my charity is only a pretence and will be betrayed as soon as my desire for possessions or for wealth is frustrated. If I cannot control my desire for alcohol, my goodwill and sense of justice towards others will last only so long as I have the means to feed my addiction. If I am lustful, my courtesy towards members of the opposite sex hides a brutish and hateful heart. In each case my 'virtue' is apparent only.

Now Protestantism can only be seen in perspective, seen for what it is, when it is isolated from the other, the Catholic, goods with which it strives to surround itself. Here are some instances.

### **Protestantism and the Convict 'Problem'**

The phenomenon in late eighteenth century England of large numbers of the population falling foul of the law and being visited with heinous penalties for breaches of petty regulations, is a manifestation of one of the multitude of the evil effects of Protestantism; the flooding of English gaols with these victims of Protestant righteousness its inevitable consequence. Australia was settled, let us not forget it, *accidentally*. This country was designed primarily as an offshore prison, a penal settlement for Protestant England.

It is customary to lament the barbarism of Hitler and Stalin. We forget that they were anticipated in the Protestant management of convict gaols established in Australia and elsewhere. The evil that flourished, for example, in the penal establishments of Norfolk Island, Port Arthur, Moreton Bay and Macquarie Harbour was the working of Protestantism. The presence of evil in those places is palpable today. Their very existence revolts the finer feelings of all right thinking men, no less than do the monuments of Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Dachau, or their counterparts in the Gulag archipelago.

The visitor to the penal settlement of Port Arthur in southern Tasmania will see the model prison, the chapel, the prison yards. He will see the machinery for the administration of a punishment for human frailty which was relentless, merciless, and out of all proportion to the offences allegedly committed; a punishment that sought not only to condemn the body but to convince the felon that his soul was already damned in hell.

The gaol chapel has been reconstructed in all its detail. All unwittingly, the conservers have demonstrated how the gaolers manifested the very worst of human viciousness. The prisoners were led into the chapel each Sunday to hear Protestant Gospel expounded by Protestant pastor. They were not brought in together; but separately, one by one, and placed in separate stalls. No felon was permitted to make contact with his fellows whether by sight or sound. So each was shielded from social contact in the chapel by partitions, wooden blinkers, which allowed only one

view, that of the edifying pastor to the front of him. This was done, be it noted, in the name of religion!

One may see at Port Arthur photographs of the felons. For the most part the faces of these men and women manifest a kind of holy resignation to their lot, of refinement through suffering. The visitor may visit nearby the Isle of the Dead, Port Arthur's cemetery. He will see many grand tombs of Protestant parsons, gaol superintendents, warders, managers and minions, their wives and children, in rank upon rank. He will look in vain, however, for the tomb of any one of these felons who were the very reason for existence of the place. Why? Such was the contempt with which the Protestant gaolers treated their charges—men made in the image and likeness of God—that they consigned their bodies, without exception, to the lime pit. All trace of these sufferers at the hands of these 'godly gaolers' was removed from the face of the earth.

Port Arthur is one of the most evil places in Australia. The mass murderer Martin Bryant could hardly have chosen a better place for his frightful work.<sup>19</sup>

### **Protestantism in Papua New Guinea**

In his classic study of life behind enemy lines on the New Guinea's Huon Peninsula during the Second World War, Australian soldier, Peter Ryan, relates the difficulties he encountered with natives who had come under the influence of German Lutheran missionaries.<sup>20</sup> It was not so much the German ethnic loyalty passed to their native charges by the Lutheran missionaries that caused problems for the Australian troops, as the Protestant influence. Ryan gives a number of examples.

"I could see that Samandzing was under strong mission influence... The people were unfriendly, and when I asked the luluai to sell us sufficient food for a meal he replied with a smirk that it was Sunday and that his people could not possibly break the Sabbath by digging food. His response had me floored for a moment—until, through the mist, I caught sight of a number of women toiling up the hill from the gardens, laden with bilums of food..."<sup>21</sup>

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"Jock [McLeod] had a few books with him, among them a cheap and battered edition of Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man*, which we dissected and discussed late into the night... Jock told me of some of his own peacetime experiences with some of the missionaries. On one occasion he remonstrated with a missionary who was making some sick natives work in a garden. 'Mr McLeod, you do not understand!' retorted the indignant missionary. 'We are not interested in the miserable bodies of these people, but in saving their immortal souls.'<sup>22</sup>

He mentions, too, the presence of evil that he and his fellow officers felt when they stayed in the Lutheran mission village, Boana. In a conversation with one of his

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<sup>19</sup> On 28<sup>th</sup> April 1996, the gunman, Martin Bryant, massacred 35 visitors to Port Arthur's gaol ruins.

<sup>20</sup> *Fear Drive My Feet*, Melbourne, 1959; reprinted, Duffy & Snellgrove, Sydney, 2001.

<sup>21</sup> Op. cit. 2001 edition, p. 86.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 90. Reade's thesis was that religion had enslaved mankind.

fellow officers, Ian Downs, he responds to Ian's expression of amazement at the speed with which he and his native carriers had reached the native village of Bawan:

"I wasn't game to spend another night in that mission [Boana]. It was giving me the horrors, and the boys too. They all reckon it's 'place no good'. If your messenger hadn't come I was going to move into one of the native villages. They may be dirty, but at least they don't give you the creeps.'

Ian nodded sympathetically. "I know what you mean. You feel you're being watched all the time—and not just by the Holy Ghost, either..."<sup>23</sup>

A retired nurse of the writer's acquaintance spent six years in Papua New Guinea in the 1970s working in various villages for one of the Catholic bishops. A great deal of her time was spent on patrol attending the natives in their sicknesses and diseases. She had much to say about the goods and the evils in the native culture and about the nobility of certain of the natives. When Ryan's comments on the 'mission' natives were mentioned to her, she related two anecdotes which served to confirm his assessment of Protestantism in Papua New Guinea.

"There was a great deal of TB and Elephantiasis in PNG. You came across them very often. There was a Protestant mission at ———— where they had a TB sanatorium. The missionaries would come looking for natives suffering the disease to take them to their sanatorium. When they heard that they were coming the natives suffering the disease would run off into the bush. The reason was that the missionaries would not allow any natives kept in the sanatorium to see their family or friends. They were not allowed their dances or art work. They made them wear western clothes and forced them to attend their faith meetings. They kept them like prisoners in a gaol."

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"I was at Kungim. A woman was brought in in obstructed labour and needed a caesarean section to deliver her child. I couldn't perform a caesarean. Frantically, we rang around on the two-way radio to see what could be done for her at the other stations. We discovered that at the staff at the mission at ———— they had a surgeon who could operate. After a great deal of negotiation, they agreed to allow us to fly this woman into their airfield so that she could be treated. But they specified that the woman should be taken out of the plane and left on the tarmac; that we were not to remain but that our plane should take off again immediately. Well, what could we do? So we flew her there, left her on the tarmac and flew back to Kungim."

### **The Attack on Reason—Subjectivism**

Perhaps the most fundamental effect of Luther's revolt was the scope it opened for the philosophical evil of subjectivism.<sup>24</sup> Though this error was not given formal expression until Descartes some 75 years after Luther's death, its roots are present in the Luther's insistence on private judgement. Out of this grew the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*, that one need have recourse to nothing but sacred scripture

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 109. See also pp. 71 and 105.

<sup>24</sup> Yet Luther was not the originator of the evil. That title belongs to William of Ockham, a Franciscan friar of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, whose Nominalist philosophy Luther had absorbed and adopted in the course of his studies.

in order to know what God has revealed. Italian theologian, Romano Amerio, describes the development of the philosophical evil from the theological error.

“Luther... places both the Bible and its meaning in the hands of the individual believer, rejects any mediating role for the Church, entrusts everything to the individual’s private lights and replaces the authority of an institution by an immediacy of feeling which prevails over all else... The liveliness of an individual’s impressions is called ‘faith’ and declared to be an immediate gift of grace. The supremacy of this individual conscience removes the foundation of all the articles of faith, because they stand or fall according to whether the individual conscience assents to, or dissents from them... [I]t is no longer the divine authority of the Church which guarantees them, but subjective individual impressions... It is not the thing which demands assent, but assent which gives value to the thing. If then, by an internal logic, this criticism of divine authority as a theological principle becomes a criticism of the authority of reason as a philosophical principle, that is no more than might have been expected...”<sup>25</sup>

The doctrine of *sola scriptura* is, of course, nonsense. Scripture cannot from itself resolve difficulties in its interpretation. If *my* interpretation of sacred scripture differs from *yours* how can we possibly know whose is correct simply by looking at the passage? *Sola scriptura* is condemned within sacred scripture itself in the interchange between the Apostle, Philip, and the eunuch, the chief treasurer of the queen of Ethiopia, over the text of the prophet Isaiah in the *Acts of the Apostles*<sup>26</sup>. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, Philip approached the eunuch’s chariot: “Do you understand what you are reading?” asked Philip. “How can I,” replied the eunuch, “unless I have someone to guide me?” Precisely! Christ is the interpreter of sacred scripture, an authority he bequeathed to his Apostles and to his Church<sup>27</sup>. Hence the passage in *Acts* goes on to say: “Beginning, then, with this text of scripture Philip expounded [the Gospel of] Jesus to him.”

In parallel with Luther’s revolt against God in Germany was that of Henry Tudor in England.<sup>28</sup> By his tyranny over those who surrounded him he contrived that truth—for instance, that he was lawfully married to Catherine of Aragon—was falsity, and falsity—for example, that Anne Boleyn was lawfully his Queen—was truth. He forced the English parliament to endorse this perversion of reason by ‘legislation’. Within three years he had overturned this invented reality. On 19<sup>th</sup> May 1537, he had Anne beheaded in the Tower of London. Why? Because, so it was alleged, she had had intercourse with other men and so was guilty of treason. For this she was condemned on 15<sup>th</sup> May. On 17<sup>th</sup> May, however, she was pronounced by Thomas Cranmer, Henry’s apostate Archbishop of Canterbury, never to have been Henry’s lawful wife! How, then, could she have been guilty of the treason for which she died two days later?

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<sup>25</sup> Romano Amerio, *Iota Unum*, [translated from 2nd Italian edition by Fr John P. Parsons], Sarto House, Kansas City, 1996, pp. 23-25.

<sup>26</sup> *Acts* 8: 26 et seq.

<sup>27</sup> ‘He who hears you hears me.’ Luke 10: 16.

<sup>28</sup> Henry had earlier attacked Luther and defended the Church in his small treatise *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*. In consequence, Pope Leo X, had conferred upon him and his successors the title *Fidei Defensor* which Henry subsequently adopted as part of the royal style.

Hence, in England, as on the Continent, the principle was established: it was no longer *reality* which was the standard of reason, but *what this or that man said was reality*. Had the revolt of Luther, had the tyranny of Henry VIII, been acknowledged and condemned universally, the scope for the flourishing of subjectivism in public and in private thought would have been stifled. But they were not.

What was the result? Truth was no longer one—but many. Truth was no longer fixed—the *identity of what is asserted with what is*; the terminus of rational research—but mutable. The effects of the revolt against God, compounded and multiplied throughout philosophy, the sciences, history and the arts over almost 500 years appear today in innumerable attitudes of doubt; in assertions that we can never be sure of reality; that history can never be objective; that beauty is in the eye of the beholder; and in the nonsensical assertion that some proposition may be ‘true for you’. The effects are manifest too in poverty of expression in every field of artistic endeavour and in the willingness to allow any and every ideology to colour one’s perception of reality, giving equal value to common sense and to the most pernicious nonsense.

It is manifest, too, in the phenomenon known as ‘political correctness’, a communal attitude of mind exercised by a significant body of the citizenry endorsing, without rational analysis, a standard in respect of some social or moral issue while vigorously opposing any argument, or anyone arguing, against that standard. It is manifest, finally, within the Catholic Church in what St Pius X called “the synthesis of all heresies”, Modernism, to which we will turn at the end of this paper.

### **The Mother of God**

Protestants object to the Catholic insistence on the proper devotion to Mary, Christ’s mother, as the Mother of God. However, their objections are nothing but a litmus test of their problems with the teaching of Jesus Christ<sup>29</sup>. Consider each of the following—

- “Thou art Peter and on this Rock I will build my church” [Matt. 16: 18];
- “I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven” [Matt. 16: 19];
- “This is my body which shall be given up for you... This cup is the new covenant in my blood which shall be shed for you... Do this in commemoration of me” [Lk. 22: 19-20];
- “Amen I say to you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life” [Jn. 6: 53-4];
- “What you bind on earth will be considered bound in heaven; what you loose on earth will be considered loosed in heaven” [Matt. 16: 19];
- “Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them” [Jn. 20: 23];

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<sup>29</sup> There is no title the mother of Christ enjoys that she does not derive from her son. So, for instance the titles Mother of God; Immaculate Conception; Assumed Body and Soul into Heaven—each signifies a dignity bestowed upon her by her son in virtue of the essential part she played in the Incarnation, in the paschal mystery, and at Pentecost in the coming of the Holy Spirit.

- “A man who divorces his wife... and marries another commits adultery” [Matt. 19: 9];
- “He who hears you [apostles], hears me” [Lk. 10: 16];

There is no Protestant who does not reject, or re-interpret the plain meaning so as to remove the force of, at least one of these teachings of Jesus Christ. Many, perhaps most, reject them all.

What Protestants desire is a Christ who fits their preconceived notions of ‘christianity’, a substitute for the reality. They do not want him to dictate how they should act, therefore they pick and choose among his teachings, rejecting the inconvenient, or the *hard sayings*, as Christ himself predicted<sup>30</sup>. Why else are the crosses on Protestant churches barren.<sup>31</sup>

Look for icons or statues of the saints in Protestant churches and you will search in vain. Why? The negative attitude to Christ’s revelation manifests itself in an iconoclasm which Protestants defend as a ban on ‘graven images’.<sup>32</sup> Here is the applicable principle: *the love of an image, forasmuch as it is an image, is the love of that whereof it is the image*. The Protestant, like the Catholic, keeps a photograph of his loved ones, not because he loves the photograph, but because the photograph contain a representation of the ones he loves. When a Catholic prays before the image of the saint he is praying not to the image but to the saint it represents. The Protestant refuses to acknowledge images of the saints because he denies the saints can assist us by their prayers. And he denies that the saints can assist us—and this is the root of it all—because he denies God’s Church which pronounces them saints. In this he returns to the source, his revolt against God and his Church.

### **William Cobbett**

Perhaps the most vehement critic of Protestantism’s claims was himself a Protestant, William Cobbett (1763-1835). Cobbett was a self educated, a self-made, man whose experiences of the British establishment in the form of corrupt Army officers, his superiors, led him to become its vocal critic. He went to prison in 1810 for his convictions, publicly criticising the flogging of local militiamen by the Hanoverians. Cobbett stood for Parliament in the constituency of Honiton in East Devon in 1806 but was unsuccessful because he refused to bribe the electorate by ‘buying’ votes. The experience encouraged him in his opposition to ‘rotten boroughs’, unrepresentative constituencies used by patrons to exercise undue influence within parliament, and encouraged him to press the need for

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<sup>30</sup> *John* 6: 61 “And many of his disciples, hearing it, said: ‘This is a hard saying, who can endure it?’”

<sup>31</sup> At least in Australia. In the side chapel of the Anglican Cathedral in Bathurst, New South Wales, there is a crucifix from which the corpus has been removed. The holes of the nails remain! Video footage of certain German Lutheran churches shows that they have retained the body of Christ on their crosses.

<sup>32</sup> The direction by an Anglican bishop to one of his pastors in early twentieth century England to remove from his church “all Illegal Ornaments at once, and especially a Female Figure with a Child”, inspired Hilaire Belloc’s satirical *Ballade of Illegal Ornaments* (cf. Hilaire Belloc, *Collected Verse*, Penguin Books, 1958, p. 147) which is reproduced as an appendix to this paper.

parliamentary reform. His experiences and publications in support of the radical movement assisted in the passage of the English *Reform Bill* of 1832.<sup>33</sup>

Cobbett wrote his *A History of the Protestant Reformation in England and Ireland* between 1824 and 1827<sup>34</sup> The work is polemic, an exercise in pamphleteering, but no less effective in its criticism for that. Anyone who wants a synopsis of the Protestant revolt and the multitude of its evil effects in England and Ireland should read Cobbett's work.

“[T]he word Reformation... means an alteration for the better; and it would have been hard indeed if the makers of this great alteration could not have contrived to give it a good name. [But] a fair and honest inquiry will teach us that this was an alteration greatly for the worse; that the ‘Reformation’, as it was called, was engendered in lust, brought forth in hypocrisy and perfidy, and cherished and fed by plunder, devastation, and rivers of innocent English and Irish blood.”<sup>35</sup>

Cobbett traces the effects of Henry's schism with Rome, ‘engendered in lust’, his encouragement by venal hangers-on to despoil the Church and the monasteries of their property, ‘cherished and fed by plunder’, and its inevitable melding with Luther's revolt. He details the extent of the persecution, relentless and particular, with which Catholics were hounded throughout England and Ireland by the English monarchs and their functionaries in the centuries that followed.

Cobbett's thesis is that the Protestant revolt sired, successively, the rise and revolt of the Puritans in England which led to the beheading of Charles I; Cromwell's rebellion and ‘glorious’ Revolution; the revolt of the American colonies against the impositions of the English known as the American Revolution; and the French Revolution. Had he lived into the twentieth century, he would doubtless have added to his list the rise of xenophobia and ideological cant which was its dominating characteristic. Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia follow logically from Luther's revolt. Hitler was influenced by modern philosophers, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer; Stalin by Marx and Hegel.<sup>36</sup> All modern philosophy is the product of subjectivism: subjectivism is the inevitable consequence of Luther's revolt.

## **The Second Vatican Council**

The Catholic Church is the spotless bride of Christ: she does not err. But her ministers can, and they frequently do. The Pope, when he teaches formally in faith

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<sup>33</sup> We owe to Cobbett the institution of *Hansard* which evolved from the reporting of parliamentary debates which he began in 1802.

<sup>34</sup> *A History of the Protestant Reformation in England and Ireland*, Benzinger Bros. New York, 1896. This edition has a commentary including notes and certain criticisms of Cobbett's work by Francis Cardinal Gasquet, archivist of the Vatican Archives and member of the Roman Curia. (This edition was reprinted [photographically reproduced] by Tan Books, Rockford Illinois, in 1988 and is available from that publisher.)

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, Ch. 1, pp. 2-3.

<sup>36</sup> Another twentieth despot and murderer, Pol Pot of Cambodia, was taught by the Existentialist Jean Paul Sartre.

or morals, is infallible. But he is not otherwise indefectible: he can make errors.<sup>37</sup> There can hardly be a Pope who has not done so. In the implementation of the Second Vatican Council there were errors, acts of imprudence and failures of principle committed by the Pope who invoked it, John XXIII, and committed by those who had the carriage of the Council which he later endorsed.<sup>38</sup> Among those errors was the promotion of the attitude that Protestants invited to attend as observers should not be offended by what was said. This served to distract many of the bishops from the single minded performance of their duty to uphold and proclaim the Catholic faith. The contributions of many were distorted to take into account heretical inclinations favourable to Protestantism.

What was the motivation behind this conduct? A theological disease, a heresy, itself sprung from the roots of Protestantism which had been working parasitically within the members of Christ's Church since before the turn of the twentieth century. It was called Modernism.

These errors contributed to the great disturbances which have afflicted the members of Christ's Church ever since. We have dealt with many of them elsewhere.<sup>39</sup> One effect in particular should be noted, the flourishing within the Church of the Protestant spirit of private authority. This manifested itself in the orchestrated uproar that attended the report of Pope Paul VI's Commission on artificial birth control in and after 1966, and the equally orchestrated opposition to the same Pope's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968. The assertion of the magisterium of theologians over the Magisterium of the Church that occurred there had its roots in the opinion of Thomas Cranmer, inspired by his immersion in Lutheran doctrines, that the issue of "the King's Great Matter" was not one for canon lawyers and the Church's courts but for theologians to determine.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> This was acknowledged explicitly by Pope Benedict XVI shortly after his succession in an impromptu address to the priests of Aosta: "The Pope is not an oracle; he is infallible in very rare situations, as we know. Therefore, I share with you these questions, these problems. I also suffer..." Cf. Zenit Archive 29.7.2005 at <http://www.zenit.org/english/> sub nom. 'Pope Has No Easy 'Recipe' For Church Crisis'. The interplay between the Pope's charism of infallibility and his conduct generally is not well understood among Catholics who frequently ascribe to him a general indefectibility.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Fr Ralph M. Wiltgen S.V.D., *The Rhine flows into the Tiber, A History of Vatican II*, New York, 1967, The First Session, October 11 to December 8, 1962. My copy by Tan Books, Rockford (Illinois), 1985. Lest it be thought that by making this claim I am somehow denying the validity of the 'beatification of Blessed John XXIII, it is to be insisted that sanctity does not confer with it indefectibility, or infallibility of teaching for that matter. Were it otherwise every saint would be a Doctor of the Church. Of all the thousands of those the Church has raised to her altars, she has conferred the title 'Doctor' on 33 only.

<sup>39</sup> *Failure of the Executive Power* at <http://www.superflumina.org/executivefailure.html>, and *The Loss of Metaphysics* at <http://www.superflumina.org/metaphysics.html>

<sup>40</sup> Warren H Carroll, *The Cleaving of Christendom*, Front Royal, Virginia, 2000, at pp. 135-6, [quoting as his authority, G. de C. Parmiter, *The King's Great Matter: A Study in Anglo-Papal Relations 1527-1534*, London, 1967] "On August 2, 1529, travelling with the King, [Stephen Gardiner and Edward Foxe] dined with Cranmer... The table talk turned to the most discussed subject in England, "the King's great matter". Cranmer, with a typical intellectual's arrogance, declared that theologians, not canon lawyers and church courts, should decide the case, which was at bottom, he said, a theological and scriptural issue. Henry should act on the advice of his theologians without bothering about what church courts said. It was remarkably bold advice and Gardiner and Foxe passed it on to Henry... Henry summoned him at the end of October 1529..."

This Protestant spirit has infected the Church's theologians since the Second Vatican Council. The majority of papers written in theological journals today proceed on the patronising assumption that the authors and their fellow theologians have unquestioned authority to pronounce on theological issues. The most recent manifestation of this *magisterium theologorum* is the widespread refusal to accept the infallible determination of Pope John Paul II in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* of the impossibility of women's ordination.

### **The Loss of Souls**

Faith is a habit of the mind whereby eternal life is begun in us, making the intellect assent to what is not apparent.<sup>41</sup> By faith a man submits his mind and will to God completely.<sup>42</sup> A man cannot make an act of faith unless, first, he freely, humbly, and reverently subjects himself to the Supreme Authority of God who knows all things and cannot deceive him, and second, he accepts with good will the truth which God has made known to him.<sup>43</sup>

"Anyone who believes in the Son has eternal life, but anyone who refuses to believe in the Son will never see life: the anger of God remains over him."<sup>44</sup>

St Thomas outlines for the Protestant his dilemma:

"[H]e who adheres to the teaching of the Church as to an infallible rule, assents to whatever the Church teaches. It is otherwise if he holds what he chooses to hold of the things taught by the Church and rejects what he chooses to reject, for he no longer adheres to the teaching of the Church as to an infallible rule, but to his own will... It is clear that such a heretic with regard to one article has no faith in the other articles, but only a kind of opinion in accordance with his own will."<sup>45</sup>

What passes for faith in Protestantism is infinitely variable for in each Protestant "it is only a kind of opinion in accordance with his own will". It is inevitable that such an uncertain base may yield to the loss of all belief. Experience confirms it. Biographies of Protestant men and women reveal an overwhelming tendency to lapse into agnosticism and atheism. It will be objected that much the same can be said, at least in the last 40 years, of Catholics. But this loss of Catholics to agnosticism and atheism has occurred precisely because of their infection with the Protestant virus.

It is Almighty God who determines how one may enter heaven, not those who with the Landgrave of Hesse proclaim their right to answer to God for what concerns "God's honour and the salvation of the souls of each one of us". They will answer to God,

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<sup>41</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 4, a. 1

<sup>42</sup> *Dei Verbum*, (The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), 18.11.1965, n. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Michael Sheehan, *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine*, revised and edited by Fr P. M. Joseph, London, 2001, p. 21

<sup>44</sup> *John* 3: 35-6.

<sup>45</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 5, a. 3; cf. II-II, q. 11, a. 1

it is true. But how will they justify to him their rejection of the means *he* has established for their salvation, the Catholic Church?

### The Heresy of Modernism

Protestantism's thesis that the believer need no longer rely upon God as his objective authority in matters of religion has had its effect, as we have shown, in the realm of thought. Reality is God's surrogate. As reality confronts us in this world, so shall God confront us in the next—in heaven, or in hell. Having (with Luther) denied God's authority, there was nothing to stop men denying reality. Though Descartes thought (in November 1619) he had received a revelation from an angel, his *cogito ergo sum* was the inevitable conclusion of a train of thought centred no longer on God but on man. From that time on philosophy came to insist that the measure of reason was no longer reality, but *what some man thought about reality*. Two effects followed: a) one could no longer be sure of the existence of anything beyond what the senses showed; and, b) reality became discounted in favour of personal perceptions, *consciousness*. After Descartes men *did* come to deny reality. Luther had not only separated men from their God, he had removed from them the foundation which enabled them to think straight!

The Modernist heresy grew out of this deviance in philosophy. According to Modernism there is nothing beyond what appears to the senses: there is no God, no infinite being who created us, who gave us our essence (*what* we are) and our existence (*that* we are); no being upon whom we are utterly reliant. There is only a 'God' of our imagination or 'belief'. All assertion of the supernatural, then, is nothing but a chimera, a delusion. All causality other than a bland materialism is done away with. All the mystery is removed from life; all the wonder; all religion. Modernism is in theology what the thought of Nietzsche is in philosophy<sup>46</sup>. There is no God and, ultimately, no reason for existence. The end is atheism, and loss of all direction. Modernism is Protestantism carried to its logical conclusion.

It is remarkable just how subtly and insidiously within the Catholic Church the Modernist virus operates. We must insist, again, on the distinction between the Church and her ministers. The Church is not something human, but something divine: it is not of man; it is of God. It alone in this world is infallible, the Pope's infallibility being only a participation in this of the Church<sup>47</sup>. The Church is not—it cannot be—infected with Modernism, but great numbers of its members (including its ministers) are. Modernism has penetrated every level of the Church from Popes down to the lowliest member of the faithful. It has spread itself through an almost universal indulgence in liturgical and sacramental abuses and through the teachings of 'experts' supported by negligent or Modernist bishops.<sup>48</sup> It has sapped the

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<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the two schools complemented each other. Nietzsche lost his faith as a result of reading Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, a prototype of the Modernist tracts which deny Christ's divinity.

<sup>47</sup> "The Roman Pontiff when he speaks ex cathedra... is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals..." *Pastor Aeternus*, July 18, 1870, ch. 4

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *The Loss of Metaphysics*, at <http://www.superflumina.org/metaphysics.html>

initiative and the courage of bishops and priests and made them terrified of standing up publicly against the secular mind.

In 1907 Pope Pius X condemned the heresy in one of the longest encyclicals ever written, *Pascendi Domenici Gregis*. In 1992 the Vatican published the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*<sup>49</sup>. That document does not mention the heresy once in all its 2,865 paragraphs. Indeed, notwithstanding the importance of his contributions to the Church's liturgy and his direction that children should be prepared to receive the essential sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist once they reach the age of reason, St Pius X, the only saint among the Popes in the last 500 years<sup>50</sup>, is not mentioned in the *Catechism* either. There could hardly be a better indicator of the extent to which the evil fruit of Luther's revolt has infected the Church's hierarchy. One is minded inevitably of Sir John Harington's couplet:

Treason doth never prosper, what's the reason?  
For if it prosper, none dare call it treason.<sup>51</sup>

## Conclusion

This paper has endeavoured to expose the Protestant pretence and the immensity of the evil Protestantism has worked in the world. A Protestant who studies his 'faith' critically will either return to its source, the Catholic Church—and find peace, or he will abandon all belief in God, and any hope for his soul.

The Catholic Church exists for the salvation of all men, believers and unbelievers. It exists for the atheist and agnostic, as it exists for the believer. It exists for the Protestant as it exists for those who follow the false gods of Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Hinduism and the like. It exists for the Jew. It intercedes not just for Catholics but for all men. It prays daily in the Mass and Divine Office for the conversion of all men to belief in the Saviour appointed by God. In the whole history of mankind there is only one question of importance—*Did Almighty God become man in Jesus Christ?* The evidence that He did, that He died and rose again from the dead, and that He communicates His message of salvation for all mankind through His Church, is overwhelming. For each man it is only a matter of believing.

"One thing in this world is different from all other. It has a personality and a force. It is recognised, and (when recognised) most violently loved or hated. It is the Catholic Church. Within that household the human spirit has roof and hearth. Outside it, is the Night."<sup>52</sup>

Michael Baker

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2007—*St John Fisher & St Thomas More, martyrs under Henry VIII*

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<sup>49</sup> In French in 1992: in 1994 in Latin and English

<sup>50</sup> Though Bl. Pius IX and Bl. John XXIII may be canonised in due course.

<sup>51</sup> Sir John Harington 1561-1612, *Epigrams* (1618) Bk. 4, n. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *A Letter to Dean Inge*: cf. [http://www.superflumina.org/belloc\\_inge.html](http://www.superflumina.org/belloc_inge.html)

## Ballade of Illegal Ornaments

"... the controversy was ended by His Lordship, who wrote to the Incumbent ordering him to remove from the Church all Illegal Ornaments at once, and especially a Female Figure with a Child."

When that the Eternal deigned to look  
On us poor folk to make us free,  
He chose a Maiden, whom He took  
From Nazareth in Galilee;  
Since when the Islands of the Sea,  
The Field, the City, and the Wild  
Proclaim aloud triumphantly  
A Female Figure with a Child.

These mysteries profoundly shook  
The Reverend Doctor Leigh, D.D.,  
Who therefore stuck into a Nook  
(Or Niche) of his Incumbency  
An Image filled with majesty  
To represent the Undefined,  
The Universal Mother – She -  
A Female Figure with a Child.

His Bishop, having read a book  
Which proved as plain as plain could be  
That all the Mutts had been mistook  
Who talked about a Trinity,  
Wrote off at once to Doctor Leigh  
In manner very far from mild,  
And said: 'Remove them instantly!  
A Female Figure with a Child!'

### ENVOI

Prince Jesus, in mine Agony,  
Permit me, broken and defiled,  
Through blurred and glazing eyes to see  
A Female Figure with a Child.