

PAPACY IN THE PROTESTANT CHURCH.

The Protestant Church repudiates the Pope. It has much to say of the right of private judgement. And yet while it dismisses the Pope at the front door, it admits the Papal principle at the back door. Not content with framing its creeds out of the facts of Christianity, which no true Christian will dispute, the Reformed churches constructed systems of theology into creeds, and substituted for the rule of the Spirit, which is the only true substitute for that of the Pope, the domination of the system. Hence, in them all, there is more or less of this papacy of creed. If any one discovers some new truth out of harmony with its statements, or error inwrought at some point, he must either be silent, or run the risk of loss of standing and preferment, and perhaps of excision. It is amazing, when one reflects upon it, how the Protestant Church has thus abandoned the principles of private judgement, and the liberty of the Spirit, upon which it was based. One need not go far to find churches where honest thought and high aspiration are repressed, where the gates of free inquiry are closed, and new light from the Word of God, and from other sources in Nature and Providence, is barred out. A fatal domination of recognized leaders, keeps the body within the strict lines of its tradition, and puts its ban upon any who dare transcend them; unless, indeed; it be done in some such covert way as not to excite suspicion that the integrity of the system is to be endangered.

To illustrate what we mean. A member of a prominent Presbyterian church remarked that his pastor, in conversing with him upon these themes, told him that he believed a great many things which gave him comfort which, as a Presbyterian minister, he could not preach. The admission has more than once been made to us by brethren of the highest standing that they found relief in the belief that God's ways in redemption were not exhausted in this world, and that sinners who proved irreclaimable under them finally suffer extinction of being. And yet none of these men would dare give public utterance to such

convictions. They regard themselves as under a sort of bond not to do so. And certainly their standing in the church would be jeopardized if they did. This is what we mean by Protestant Papacy. How, we would ask, can there be honest progress in the knowledge of the truth, if honest convictions must thus be concealed?

– *Words of Reconciliation.*

