

AN ALARMING PROPOSITION.

And still they travel the road to Rome. We have frequently of late given in these columns instances of the way in which Catholicism is absorbing Protestantism, or rather the way in which Protestantism is plunging headlong into Catholicism, and now we have another step to record. In the *Christian at Work* of April 12, Prof. Charles A. Briggs, D.D., of Union Theological Seminary, New York, had an article entitled "Is Rome an Ally, an Enemy, or Both?" Starting out with the assertion that "the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches are agreed in nine-tenths or more of the contents of Christianity," Doctor Briggs makes some statements concerning the Reformation, and then says: –

"We are agreed as to the essentials of Christianity. Our common faith is based on the so-called apostles' creed, our worship on the Lord's prayer, and our morals on the ten commandments and the sermon on the mount. Who will venture to say that the Roman Catholic Church is not as faithful to these foundations of our common religion as Protestants? Taking our stand on the apostles' creed, we must add to the articles of faith on which we are agreed, all the doctrinal achievements of the church for fifteen centuries, the doctrine of the unity of God, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Holy Trinity, original sin and human depravity, salvation by divine grace, the absolute need of the atonement of Jesus Christ. On all these great doctrines of our religion, Romanism and Protestantism are one. Here we are allies, and it is our common task to proclaim these doctrines to the heathen world, and to overcome by them all forms of irreligion and infidelity in Christian lands. And differences about justification by faith, and salvation by the divine grace alone, and the authority of the church as regards the determination of the canon of Scripture, and its interpretation, ought not to prevent our cooperation and alliance in the great work of indicating and proclaiming the

common faith. Our conflict over the doctrines in which we differ would be more fruitful in good results, if our contest should be based upon concord and alliance in the common faith. If our contest could be narrowed to the real points of difference, and that contest could be conducted in a brave, chivalrous, and loving manner, the results would be more fruitful.

"Taking our stand upon the Lord's prayer, we observe that as to the greater part of Christian worship we are agreed. We worship God in common, in morning and evening assemblies, by prayer, songs of praise, the reading and preaching of the Scriptures, and the celebration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. All this is common. Furthermore, we take the liberty of affirming that the matter of all this worship is for the most part common in both these great bodies of Christians. I have heard sermons in Roman Catholic churches of Europe which were more evangelical and less objectionable than many sermons I have heard in leading Protestant churches in Berlin, London and New York. It is well known that the Protestant books of liturgy contain a considerable amount of material derived from the old mass-books, and they are all the more valuable for that. Roman Catholic baptism has many superstitions connected with it, but the essentials of baptism are there in the baptism by the minister in the name of the Holy Trinity. Roman Catholic observance of the Lord's supper is connected with the worship of the materials of the supper under the doctrine that they are really the body and blood of the divine Lord; but who can deny that pious souls by faith really partake of the body and blood of Christ in his holy sacrament, notwithstanding the errors in which it is enveloped? If we look with eyes of Christian charity upon the Lutheran and Zwinglian views, which are regarded as serious errors by the standards of the Reformed churches, and do not deny to the participants real communion with Christ, why should we deny such communion to pious Roman Catholics?

"In all matters of worship we are in essential concord with Roman Catholics, and we ought not to hesitate to make an alliance with them so far as possible, to maintain the sanctity of the Sabbath as a day of worship, and to proclaim to the world the necessity of worshiping God in his house, and of becoming members of his church by baptism, and of seeking union and communion with the Savior by Christian worship, the study of the Scriptures, and the observance of the Lord's supper. With this recognition of concord, Protestants can then debate with Romanists in a friendly manner, and seek to overcome their errors, remove the excrescences they have heaped upon the simple worship in the spirit and in truth, which seems to us more in accordance with the Scripture and with the wishes of the Savior.

"We should also note that in the great constituent parts of prayer – the invocation, adoration, thanksgiving, confession of sin, petition, intercession, and consecration – Roman Catholic and Protestant worship are agreed, and consequently the matter of prayer is essentially the same, the differences are less than most people imagine. In Christian song the differences are still less. If our hymnbooks were stripped of hymns from the ancient and mediaeval church, and from modern Roman Catholics, they would be bare indeed.

"Looking now at the sphere of morals, we take our common stand on the ten commandments and the sermon on the mount. As to the vast majority of all questions of morals, Romanism and Protestantism are agreed. It is true there **[R1169 : page 6]** is a great deal of immorality in the Roman Catholic Church in some countries, and we think it may be shown that as a rule Protestantism is productive of better morals than Romanism; but this, after all, is a question of more or less, and to say the least, Protestantism has little to boast of. On all these questions it is of the highest importance that the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant churches should make an alliance. Their joint efforts would have an influence upon public and

private morals such as the world has not yet witnessed. We may agree to differ and debate on all questions of morals where there is discord. But when we are agreed on the vast majority of questions that come before the public, it is sheer folly for us to waste our energies in antagonism when co-operation and alliance would be productive of vast good.

"We hold, therefore, that the Roman Catholics and the Protestants ought not to hesitate to ally themselves for the maintenance and the protection of those great principles of Christian doctrine, Christian worship, and Christian morals that they hold in common."

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The proposed alliance with Rome, the necessity for which Doctor Briggs reiterates so often, is a noteworthy sign of the times, and we could not ignore it and be true to our name. The Doctor seems to base his plea for alliance quite largely upon the fact that Protestantism is about as bad as Catholicism. He says above that Protestantism has little to boast of over Roman Catholicism, in the way of morality; and elsewhere in the same article he says: –

"Why should we complain of the persecutions that our ancestors suffered from Rome, when we have to lament that others of our ancestors were merciless to Roman Catholics? Roman Catholic intolerance and bigotry may be matched by Protestant intolerance and bigotry. I doubt whether God looks with any more favor upon these detestable vices in the one than in the other."

This is, no doubt, a valid reason why Protestantism and Roman Catholicism should join; for when Protestantism becomes as bad as Catholicism, we can see no necessity for maintaining a separate existence. For ourselves we think that there is yet quite a difference between the two bodies; but when a prominent professor in one of the leading theological seminaries in the land can see no difference

between the Lord's supper as celebrated according to the divine command, and the Roman Catholic mass, and when he endorses "all the doctrinal work of the [Catholic] Church for fifteen centuries," the point of perfect union cannot be far off.

What an array of names we now have in favor of Protestant union with Catholicism – Doctors Hodge, Hitchcock, Schaff, Patton, Briggs, Field, etc. But who has heard or read of a Catholic priest clamoring for Catholic union with Protestantism? – Nobody. Why not? Would not the Catholic Church be willing to enter into such an alliance as these Protestant doctors of divinity propose? – Most certainly it would be, but the movement must all be made by the Protestants. The Catholic Church will gladly receive the Protestant churches to her bosom; she will accept their aid in the furtherance of her peculiar schemes; but she can afford to wait till they come of their own accord, for if they make the proposal, she can dictate the terms.

One more thought. What must we conclude will be the effect of an alliance between Protestantism and Catholicism, when we remember that one of the strongest pleas for such an alliance is, not that Catholicism is as good as Protestantism, but that Protestantism is nearly, if not quite, as bad as Catholicism? Those who know anything of Rome's peculiarities do not need to have an answer given them.

Some may say that we are alarmists. Indeed we are; and we think that any one who sees such danger approaching and does not sound an alarm, deserves to suffer all the ill that may follow. Our only wish is that we might sound the alarm so loud that it would awaken the thousands who seem to be asleep, and who are in danger of being taken in the snare.

– *Signs of the Times.*

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Surely Protestants are rapidly losing their hold of those doctrines of Christ and the apostles which once so clearly indicated Papacy to

be the great Antichrist system of the Bible. All who doubt the correctness of that application are respectfully referred for evidences to the last chapter of MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. II. As for that corner stone of all false doctrine, "the sacrifice of the mass," it will be treated in the next volume of DAWN, and its mention by the prophet, as the **[R1169 : page 7]** desolating abomination, will be clearly shown.
