

EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTISM: THE ONLY SURE MEANS OF RESISTING THE ADVANCES OF SUPERSTITION AND INFIDELITY

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THE subject of this paper is "Evangelical Protestantism the only sure means of resisting the advances of superstition and infidelity." Here are two evils brought before our attention. These two evils are superstition and infidelity. For the cure of these two evils there is suggested one and one only remedy. That remedy is stated to be Evangelical Protestantism, which is (in other words) Scriptural truth. The Scriptures themselves are both Evangelical and Protestant. The Church of England, as will be shown, is also Evangelical and Protestant; and therefore the Church Association, which was instituted in 1865 for the express purpose of upholding "the doctrine, principles, and order of the Church of England," is likewise both Evangelical and Protestant. As, then, "Evangelical Protestantism" and Bible truth are the same thing, we must bring all our religious controversies to one final appeal. That final appeal is the word of the living God. This is plainly stated by our sixth Article, which says:—"Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required, of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." The twentieth Article asserts the same:—"It is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written." With this agrees the twenty-first Article:—"Things ordained (by Councils) as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture." The word of God is the sword of the Spirit. "Thus it is written" was the only weapon used by our Lord in His conflict with Satan, and with the scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees; and it must be our only weapon in the religious controversies of the present generation.

I therefore proceed, with God's own Word in my hand, to explain—

I. WHAT IS EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTISM.

II. WHAT ARE ITS EFFECTS.

Let us inquire—

I. WHAT IS EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTISM.

(1.) The word *Evangelical* is derived from a Greek word, which signifies "good news," or "good tidings." And what are these good tidings? "Behold," cried the angel to the shepherds, "I bring you good tidings, good tidings of great joy; for unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." A Church therefore to be Evangelical must make known by its formularies and its clergy the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. This our Evangelical Church does in every part of its teaching. Our second Article tells us that "the Son, which is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took our nature upon Him, and suffered and was

crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile His Father to us; and was made a sacrifice, not only for our original guilt, but also for all our actual sins." But before we can feel our need of a Saviour we must be aware of our lost and ruined condition by reason of our sins. The Church puts, therefore, into our mouths the confession: "We have erred and strayed. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own wicked hearts. There is no health in us;" and we then state that we have no hope of mercy except through God's promise of pardon, declared unto us in Christ Jesus our Lord. And how is this mercy to be obtained? And how are we, such grievous transgressors, to be esteemed righteous? We are accounted "righteous before God," replies our eleventh Article, "only for the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings." How plainly, too, are we taught by the thirteenth Article the necessity of our being born again, the necessity of conversion, before these high blessings can become our own! "Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of His Spirit"—that is before the new birth—"are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith." The whole work of our salvation is here plainly set forth. We must first of all, by the grace of Christ, experience the sin-convincing power or inspiration of the Holy Ghost. We must, then, have faith in the Lord Jesus; faith in His atoning blood; faith in His justifying righteousness; faith in His prevailing mediation. Then, and not till then, shall we bring forth acceptable fruit. Before our conversion, all our good works, so called, are dead works, loathsome and abominable in God's sight. After our conversion, they are acceptable works: works of faith, made acceptable because we are in Christ. His blood and merits make all we do to become a sweet-smelling savour before our loving and reconciled God and Father. This, in outline, is Evangelical teaching.

(2.) We now turn to that which is *Protestant*. At the time of the Reformation, three hundred years ago, the grand controversy of the day was, not with infidelity, but with the superstitions of the Church of Rome. What, therefore, we might have expected took place. Our Reformers, in their summaries of faith, protested chiefly against the errors by which they were at that time confronted. They were not confronted with the denial of the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures; and therefore they did not put forth any special Article upon that particular subject. But that the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures was taken for granted by our Reformers will appear from the following utterances of the Church of England as to the Bible. Article XX says, "God's Word written." The Collect tells us that it was God "who caused all Holy Scripture to be written." The Litany teaches us to pray God to endue us with the grace of His Holy Spirit that we may amend our lives "according to His holy Word." And these creeds, we are told, are to be thoroughly received and believed—why? Only because they may be proved "by most certain warrants of Scripture."

In like manner Articles VI, XVII, XVIII, XXI, XXIV, XXV, XXVII, XXXIV all appeal to the Bible alone as the sole, certain, and absolute rule of faith. Also, in the royal declaration prefixed to the Articles, we are reminded twice over that their authority consists in their being "agreeable to God's Word." Moreover at his ordination each candidate is asked, "Do you unfeignedly believe all the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?" To which question he answers, "I do believe them." We see then in what light the Church of England regards the Bible. And in what language, quoting their opinions from the Bible, did our Reformers describe the superstitions from which, by God's favour, they had just escaped? Against these superstitions they most earnestly protested. Some men at the present day pretend to be ashamed of the word Protestant. They may as well be ashamed of the Bible. The Bible protests loudly against every form of religious error. See what took place in Israel during the reign of Ahab. There was a great apostacy in the land. The prophet Micaiah was sent for. As he was approaching the king, the royal messenger, for the sake of a hollow peace between truth and error, urged him not to oppose the prevailing sentiment of the day. "Behold," he said to Micaiah, "the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth. Let thy word, I pray thee, be as the word of one of them, and speak that which is good." Now what was Micaiah's noble protest? Micaiah said, "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak." We see, too, how St. Paul in his day protested against every form of false doctrine. He knew nothing about various schools of thought. Did ritualistic teachers at Colosse try to force upon the people their carnal ordinances, "touch not, taste not, handle not?" "Beware," he

sternly said, "lest any man spoil you, through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men. Ye are complete in Christ." Did teachers of Broad Church views attempt to explain away in Corinth the general resurrection, and assert that it was passed already? He protested vehemently against that delusion, and gave the Church of Christ, in consequence, the fullest explanation of the resurrection of Christ and of the dead that is to be found in all the Bible besides. In like manner did he perceive that some of the pillars of the Church were giving way in Galatia? That Peter, and Barnabas and others, for want of spiritual backbone, were making dangerous concessions? He boldly rebuked these timid, counsels; and denounced such temporizing with vital truth, rebuking even Peter to his face, because he was to be blamed. Nay with terrible earnestness he protested, that if even an angel from heaven preached wrong doctrine, he would wish him to be accursed. In fact the most precious portions of St. Paul's epistles are his protests against corruptions of the Gospel; and thus, in God's overruling watchfulness, these devices of Satan were ever overruled for the more plain and decided setting forth of the truth of the Gospel. Our Evangelical and Protestant Church following the example of Micaiah, and Paul, and other servants of Christ, teaches her clergy and people to be bold in protest against error, from whatever side that error may arise. Examine our public services. Whenever Archbishops or Bishops are consecrated, or priests are ordained, they acknowledge this. At that solemn moment they are asked two important questions. The first question is, "Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through "faith in Jesus Christ?" Then follows another question: "Are you ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word; and both privately and openly to call upon and encourage others to do the same?" "I am ready," is the answer returned, "the Lord being my helper." Every minister of our Church, whether Archbishop, Bishop, Priest or Deacon, is therefore bound, by his own promise publicly made, to be a Protestant, and to drive away, and to help others to drive away, all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to the teaching of God's inspired truth. What are those erroneous and strange doctrines against which all ministers are bound to protest will now appear. This is the second division of my subject. We have seen what is *Evangelical Protestantism*. Let us now ask

II. WHAT ARE ITS EFFECTS?

My subject asserts that "Evangelical Protestantism is the only sure means of resisting the advances of superstition and infidelity." "The only sure means," I know of no other means. I know of no other barrier or breakwater. The Bible knows of no other barrier or breakwater. Nor does our Evangelical and Protestant Church. Nor does our Evangelical and Protestant Church Association. We see what a barrier Evangelical Protestantism is—

(1) *As regards Superstition.*

The heathen, in their superstitious worship, have gods many and lords many. But Evangelical Protestantism tells us that there is but one God, the Father, and but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. In our own Christian land also much superstition unhappily exists. Some persons hold most superstitious views as to the Supper of our Lord. Not a few superstitiously believe that there is some change wrought in the bread and wine after the prayer of consecration. But what says the Communion Service itself? It tells God's faithful, God's believing people, that in that sacrament they feed upon Christ, not with their mouths, but in their hearts, and that too by faith, combined with thanksgiving. "Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving." "The body of Christ," the twenty-eighth Article says, "is given, taken and eaten, in the Supper only after a heavenly and spiritual manner, and the means whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten is by faith." The same doctrine is clearly stated in our twenty-ninth Article. "Of the wicked which eat not the body of Christ in the use of the Lord's Supper." "The wicked," it says, "although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth

the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ.” Some people again superstitiously imagine that every time they attend the Lord’s Supper they are making a fresh offering of Christ for their own sins, and for the sins of others, both the living and dead. But such persons must surely willfully forget that our service, as plainly as language can speak, protests against such a notion. It protests against such superstition by telling us that, “the Lord Jesus suffered death upon the Cross for our redemption, and that He made there (by that one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.” That “one oblation” of Himself was “once” offered—and only once—once for all. But as though that protest were not sufficient, the thirty-first Article on “the one” oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross,” is stronger still. That Article says: “The offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of masses, in the which it was commonly said, that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits.” You observe those words. The offering of Christ was once made—once only. The repetitions of that offering, the Masses for the quick and dead, are “blasphemous fables,” with no authority for them in God’s Word. They are also “dangerous deceits.” What stronger protest again can we have against that Romish error than that contained in the statement at the close of the office for the Holy Communion? That statement says, that after the Supper, “the sacramental bread and wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored (for that were idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians); and the natural body and blood of our Saviour Christ are in heaven, and not here; it being against the truth of Christ’s natural body to be at one time in more places than one.” How decisive! The natural body of Christ is in heaven, and cannot be at the same time on ten thousand altars—so called.

There are, again, some superstitious persons, who never lose an opportunity of taking the Lord’s Supper, and who appear to imagine that there is no feeding upon Christ except by these outward symbols. What a protest against such gross superstition is the rubric in the office for the Communion of the Sick! “But if a man, either by reason of extremity of sickness, or for want of warning in due time to the curate, or for lack of company to receive with him, or by any other just impediment, do not receive the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood, the curate shall instruct him, that if he do truly repent him of his sins, and steadfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the Cross for him, and shed His blood for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits He hath thereby, and giving Him hearty thanks therefore, he doth eat and drink the body and blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul’s health, although he do not receive the sacrament with his mouth.” What more clear? The penitent and believing eat and drink the body and blood of Christ “by faith.” They do so, even though they do not receive the bread and wine with their mouth. The best mode, therefore, and indeed the only sure mode, of resisting the advances of superstition, is the repeated enunciation of the Evangelical and Protestant teaching both of the Bible and of our own Church upon this sacrament. Our hope for the future of our Church is that our younger clergy will adopt the clear and distinctive doctrines of grace as set forth in what Prophet Daniel calls “the Scripture of truth.” Too many young clergymen have begun with manuals of theology, and have turned, in the second place, not in the first place, to the unerring word of the living God. The result is, their ministry is hazy and indistinct, and they themselves are walking in fetters, and will probably continue to do so all their days.

But Evangelical Protestantism is the only sure means of resisting error, not only as regards superstition, but also

(2) As regards Infidelity.

Infidelity springs not so much from the head as from the heart. The life goes wrong, and then the head goes wrong also. Free living is for the most part the parent of free thinking. It is the evil heart

that engenders the unbelief. To all such infidels and sceptics, and scoffers, the Bible says: "Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Wash you and make you clean." God's eternal power and Godhead are so manifest in the works of Creation, that all unbelievers and sceptics are pronounced by God the Holy Ghost to be "without excuse." The Bible describes their willful folly, by declaring, "It is the fool who has said in his heart there is no "God." But infidelity and scepticism are openly avowed by some professed members even of our Evangelical and Protestant Church. Of such Sadducees we may boldly speak as spake our blessed Lord to the Sadducees of His generation. Those men, like our modern Sadducees, belonged to the National Church; and that National Church, like our own, believed in Moses and the Prophets. And how did our Lord protest against their wilful ignorance? "Ye do err," He said, "not knowing the Scriptures." Some of these broad and lax members of our Church, in their wide and loose charity, openly avow their belief that no one will be condemned for his views, if his conduct be only amiable and sincere. But what says the eighteenth Article of our Church? "They also are to be accursed that presume to say that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature. For Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved." Other misguided members of our Church, both ministers and people, have entertained and published the most unsatisfactory statements as to the duration of future punishment. It is an awful subject for our finite capacities to contemplate. But in this, as in every other religious question, we must not ask, what we think, or what we desire, but what are the statements of God's inspired Word. Now that Word, both in the original Hebrew and in the original Greek, uses the very same expressions to denote the duration of the happiness in heaven, and the duration of the misery in hell. If, therefore, heaven is for ever; hell must be for ever also. Our Evangelical and Protestant Church, following Scripture, speaks in the Athanasian Creed of "everlasting life," and of "everlasting fire." In our Burial Service it also speaks of the "resurrection to eternal life," and also of the "bitter pains of eternal death." On this point every clergyman, by his ordination vows, is bound to receive the plain teaching of his own Church. This is well set forth as regards the Thirty-nine Articles, the preface to which says, "No man hereafter shall either print or preach, to draw the Article aside any way, but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning thereof; and shall not put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense."

I think enough has now been said to show that not only the Bible, but that our Church also, is both Evangelical and Protestant, and that the best, and indeed the only sure method of resisting the advances both of superstition and infidelity, is by clearly setting forth the precious truths revealed to us in God's Word. And those clergy do the best service to our Church, who consistently follow her Evangelical and Protestant teaching, and who are resolved, like St. Paul of old, to know nothing among their hearers save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. "Preach Christ Jesus the Lord," said Bishop Reynolds two hundred years ago. "Determine to know nothing among your people but Christ crucified. Let His Name and grace, His Spirit and love, triumph in the midst of all your sermons. Let your great end be to glorify Him in the heart, to render Him amiable and precious in the eyes of His people, to lead them to Him as a sanctuary to protect them, a propitiation to reconcile them, a treasure to enrich them, a physician to heal them, an advocate to present them and their services to God, as wisdom to counsel them, as righteousness to justify, as sanctification to renew, as redemption to save. Let Christ be the diamond to shine in the bosom of all your sermons." Those ministers who most closely follow such advice are most likely to stay the plague of modern superstition and infidelity, as well as build up the waste places of our Church and restore the foundations of many generations. This idea was well explained some forty years ago at one of our Church Pastoral Aid anniversaries by the excellent Dr. John Bird Sumner, then Bishop of Chester, and afterwards Lord Archbishop of Canterbury. He was referring to the attacks then being made upon our Church by political dissenters. "If you were to ask one of these agitators," said the Bishop, "which he would prefer,—a hundred pamphlets in defence of the Church, and widely distributed in any particular parish, or whether he would "prefer one Curate such as the Church Pastoral Society delights to support,—what do you think," asked the Bishop, "would be his answer? His answer would doubtless be, 'By all means print and publish your pamphlets; scatter

them broadcast in every house and workshop; but, I pray you, keep back, oh! Keep back, “that Curate, that Protestant and Evangelical Curate, or my “occupation will be gone.” May God, in His great mercy to our Church, raise up many *such* clergymen in all the parishes of our land! In which case the occupation of the Church Association will also be gone. The need for its operations will no longer exist.

But now, leaving controversial topics, I wish to conclude by adding briefly two practical and spiritual remarks. We have considered—

I. WHAT IS EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTISM

II. WHAT ARE ITS EFFECTS.

I think we ought to carry away from our meeting here today a deep sense of

(1) *The need of prayer for our Church.*

Do we need Evangelical and Protestant ministers for our Evangelical and Protestant Church of England? Such ministers are to be had. They are to be had from Christ, the great Head of the Church. Our ascended Lord has received such gifts for men; and these precious gifts, converted and able priests; whose lips keep knowledge, He is waiting and willing to bestow. But for this He will be inquired after. This is His own remedy for the many ills of our day. “The harvest is great,” He said, “and the labourers are few.” And what is the remedy He prescribes? “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.” The harvest is His; and the labourers are His, given in answer to our constant and fervent supplications. Let us therefore wrestle with the Lord Jesus, as did Israel of old, and give Him no rest, till from our Universities, Theological Colleges, and public schools, many young men, filled with the Holy Ghost, are raised up, to take the places of their seniors, who will soon pass away into higher and holier services in the upper sanctuary. At Oxford and at Cambridge, and at other schools of the sons of the prophets, there are already established prayer unions for this important object. May those daily and weekly supplications go up through the mediation of Christ, as a sweet smelling savour before God’s throne! And God grant that the same result may follow now as followed in the days of our Lord! The Lord Jesus first of all appointed His twelve Apostles. He then appointed other evangelists, in number seventy. And for what purpose did He appoint them? Those seventy He sent, we read, into every city and place into which “He Himself would come.” Let us pray therefore that He will raise up and send forth Evangelical and Protestant incumbents and curates into all our parishes! And let us pray that into every city, and town, and village, and place into which He sends those ministers “He Himself will come.” And what will follow? His so coming will be, by the Holy Spirit’s presence and power, as life from the dead to our Church and nation. Yea, so come, Lord. Come, Lord Jesus.

My last brief remark is this. We see not only our need of prayer, but also

(2) *The need of the Holy Spirit’s teaching for our Church.*

Blessed are our eyes, for they see! Blessed are our ears, for they hear! Truths which David among the kings, and Isaiah among the prophets, desired to know, we, happily, through God’s grace, now possess. But those truths cannot be comprehended without the Spirit’s teaching. That spiritual teaching is necessary for the hearer. It is equally necessary for the teacher. How properly, therefore, were we clergy admonished at our ordination to pray for “the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost!” And why so? That “by the daily reading and weighing of the Scriptures” we might wax riper and stronger day by day in our ministry, and that so, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, there may be left no place in our various spheres of duty for superstition or infidelity, or for any other “error in religion, or for viciousness in life.” Without the Holy Spirit the Bible itself is a dark and unintelligible book. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness unto him. They are spiritually discerned—discerned by the Holy Spirit’s teaching. Alas,

then, how many are going wrong for want of this spiritual teaching! These men, both ministers and laymen, believe the Bible. They believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. But here they stop. They treat theology as they treat any secular science. Knowing the plan of salvation, however, is not accepting it. What is the solemn fact? A man may know his Bible accurately from Genesis to Revelation. He may have thoroughly examined the Old Testament in its original Hebrew, and the New Testament in its original Greek. He may have weighed all the controverted passages and disputed texts. He may have even written and preached upon all those subjects; and yet, after all, may never have received the saving teaching of the Holy Spirit, and be therefore altogether destitute of that faith in Christ which delivers the soul from hell, and lands it amid the glories of heaven. "How many fathers of a country," exclaims Mr. Richard Cecil, "how many bulwarks of a Church, have secured everything in both, except their own souls! Have defended the faith, and yet perished in unbelief! Opposed Satan in one way, and yet lived his captives in another! My heart," he adds, "has yearned at marking a great man, wise in his generation, skillfully holding the reins of some vast enterprise, grasping with a master mind its various relations, and penetrating with an eagle-eye into what? Into everything except himself. A fallen spirit in a disordered world! Having a day of salvation! And that brief day neglected! How natural," he says, "was the dying language of such an one, when, with his last breath, he exclaimed, 'The battle is fought—the battle is fought; but the victory is lost for ever.'"

What ruinous self-deception! May God the Holy Ghost teach all our teachers! May the same Holy Ghost rest upon all our congregations! May He rest upon them in His new-creating and sanctifying power! And to this end may we each put up for England the prayer which dear Robert M'Cheyne offered forty years ago for his beloved Scotland:—

"Give me a man of God the truth to preach,
A house of prayer within convenient reach,
Seat-rents the poorest of the poor can pay,
A spot so small one pastor can survey, —
Give these, and give the Spirit's genial shower,
England will be a garden all in flower."

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits."