

# TIMELY TOPICS.

POLITICAL, BIBLICAL, ETHICAL, PRACTICAL.

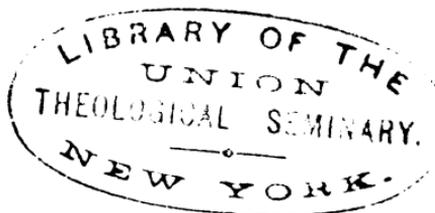
DISCUSSED

BY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS, PROFESSORS AND EMINENT  
WRITERS OF OUR TIME.

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## THE PAPACY IN POLITICS.

BY CHANCELLOR JOHN HALL, D.D., LL.D., OF THE  
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**T**HERE are many excellent people who deprecate any severe strictures upon that system of religion the representatives of which in Rome, and in our own country, are making public and effusive declarations of their love for us and for our American institutions. It is natural that in a nation like ours, where all men are free and equal, anything savoring of narrowness and prejudice should be discouraged. But it is possible to make a discrimination that is often ignored in these criticisms upon the "narrow and bigoted" Protestants who stand with the Reformers, the Puritans, and the historians. I think there have been upright, humane and kind-hearted members of the imperial family of Russia; but I do not, as an American citizen, feel kindly to the Russian system of government. I have met extremely amiable members of the Russian aristocracy, but I do not like the system they represent. Or, to put it more directly, there were some excellent people in Great Britain in the close of the last century, but British sway was set aside notwithstanding. Now, is there not room for a candid discrimination on corresponding lines in regard to pronounced Protestants? Can they not be credited with the recognition of devoutness and piety in Roman Catholics, while pronounced against the system known as the Papacy? Are not the very critics who think us wanting in charity slightly defective themselves in that virtue which is so attractive when it is intelligent and genuine?

Again, it is common enough to say in relation to strictures on the Papacy that the past is not to be taken into

account, for it had its bad features all around, and the evil has been discarded in the more enlightened times in which we live. Is this plea well founded? Protestant bodies might properly set it up. They make no claim to infallibility in their leaders and consequent unchangeableness. But it is different with the Papacy. We do not linger over the question whether the infallibility is personal as well as official. The claim is that the Popes fill an office divinely appointed, at the head of a Church that can make no mistakes. Its principles, therefore, admit of no change. What it was since the day, as it alleges, when the Apostle Peter ordained Clement I. as Pope, according to the "Decretals" which for centuries gave supremacy to the Pontiffs, it is now; an unerring infallible wisdom has shaped the policy and determined the character of the Papacy. What it has been, according to the nature it claims, it will be. Pope Gregory VII. counted it justification of his claims that former Popes had pursued the same policy. And in 1864 Pius IX. points to his illustrious predecessors for the defence of his Encyclical and Syllabus. "We will demonstrate," says that eminent Pontiff, "that Christ, in giving to the Apostle power to bind and loose men, excepted no one. The Holy See has absolute power over all spiritual things; why should we not also rule temporal affairs? God reigns in the heavens; His Vicar should reign over all the earth. These senseless wretches, however, maintain that the royal is above the Episcopal dignity. Are they, then, ignorant that the name of king was invented by human pride, and that the title of Bishop was instituted by Christ? St. Ambrose affirms that the Episcopate is superior to royalty as gold is superior to a viler metal." Has this principle ever been renounced? Was Gregory VII. infallible? If so, then the Church, where it is politic and safe, may be expected to teach the same doctrines and to pursue the same policy.

If any reader wishes to verify and follow further the statements here made, he has only to give a little attention to "Milman's Latin Christianity." "Ah! but," says some one, "that is a great, learned, many volumed book, and life is full of work with me. I have no time for going through it." Well, there is another and easier way. Write to Harper & Brothers for a copy of "The Papacy and the Civil Power," and give it—there is but one volume—a careful study, and you will be better able to form a judgment as to your duty as an American citizen.

"But," it may be alleged, "ambitious Popes are one thing; we do not judge of the Papacy by them. There is a great body of intelligent people, refined, accomplished—look at their continental cities, picture galleries, and so forth; they can be depended upon to keep things right." Now let us see. Did you ever give any study to the agencies that built up the papal power for centuries? If not, please to consider the point of the following sentences. The Roman Bishop Siricius ruled from A.D. 384 to 398. Editors of ecclesiastical laws usually began their list with him; but the editor of the "Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals" went back to Clement, whom he made the immediate, or the second, successor to Peter. He gave letters, canons and decrees, assigning to the first Popes all that was claimed in pomp, power, control of nations and kings in the ninth century; and the Church, the great community under the Popes, accepted the whole. Nicholas I. (858–867) paraded these "Decretals" as his warrant for action. And they continued in authority for many centuries, and while no high-class authors now stand up for their genuineness, mild apologies are made for their "well-meant" errors and mistakes. They represent the clergy as including patriarchs, princes, archbishops, and so forth in the first century. They guard ecclesiastics against charges, trials and condemnations, requiring seventy-two trustworthy wit-

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nesses, sound in the faith, against a bishop, and, in fact, protect the clergy against all criticism, no matter what their lives might be. They assign, as their second great object, the power over civil rulers to the Popes, who are made judges in all contests ecclesiastical, and they call for "appeals to Rome" in all matters. The number, the audacity, the clumsiness of these forgeries would be incredible if they had not been examined and exposed. Think, for example, of some of the alleged thirty-three Popes, from Peter down to Siricius (A.D. 385), being credited with letters to men who did not live till two centuries after the alleged writers, with decisions and decrees of councils centuries after their time, with quotations from Popes in Encyclicals to Churches that did not then exist, and with passages from Popes who ruled in the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth centuries, while they were all prior to A.D. 385! If the reader has any doubt about the accuracy of these statements, he has only to consult Dupin or Dorner; and if these seem to him remote and too learned, he can take up Professor Fisher's "History of the Christian Church" (p. 169). Here are the words of this dispassionate historian: "The most advanced pretensions ever propounded or hinted at by the most ambitious Pontiffs were here explicitly and systematically set forth in spurious letters and decrees to which the names of venerated bishops of the early Church were attached."

Now, if it be thought that the community under the Papacy can be trusted to defend itself against personal ambition in the Popes, we reply that the history of these "Decretals," accepted for more than six hundred years, and only recognized as forgeries in the fifteenth century, shows how little reliance can be placed on the ruled as against papal rulers. As corroborating this view, we may add that while the forger of the "Decretals" wished, apparently, to protect the bishops and other dignitaries against the Popes, they were so adroitly used as to put in the hands

of the Pontiff almost supreme power over them. Any reader desirous of verifying these statements can turn (in addition to others quoted) to the Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia, where they come in their natural place, as "Pseudo-Isidorean." The extent to which the Papacy has been engaged in plans, schemes and conflicts outside the religious sphere and more or less in the political, can be verified by any fairly full Church history. Read the history of the "Holy Roman Empire," with its emperors making Popes and Popes making emperors. Read Pope Gregory's bull with its appeal to Peter and Paul as able to "take away, or to give to each, according to his merits, empires, kingdoms, duchies, marquises, counties, and the possessions of all men." Study Innocent III., proclaiming that "the crowns of kings and the destinies of nations were lodged by a divine decree in" the hands of Peter's successors. But there is no room for a detailed reference to these chapters in history with their ample evidence that the Papacy, ever since its development, has been a political force in the degree in which it was possible, under the influence of aims and motives, good, bad, and indifferent. And nowhere has the Church renounced, deprecated or disclaimed the powers thus put forth and vindicated as conveyed by Christ through Peter to his "successors" to the end of time.

If to any reader the area of history on the subject in hand seem too wide, then let attention be given to the organization so intimately linked, in these later times, with the Papacy, namely the Jesuits. It is fair to say that while this "order" has been the child of the Church, it has often been a rebellious child, pushing its own interests irrespective of its mother's. It has never shrunk from political action in its own interests, and has often evaded, and disregarded Papal injunctions. The Jesuits were put down by Portugal for their political trade and commercial operations. Again and again put down and restored—as by papal

bull in 1814—it is well known that they are now in papal favor, with infallible recognition, although they had been broken up in France, in Switzerland, Prussia, and Bavaria. An infallible Pope suppressed the order in 1773, and all Europe appeared to approve the decision reluctantly reached. It is a significant fact that the order is restored in our time.

Now the question may naturally arise in the reader's mind: "What is the use of discussing a matter of this nature? We are nineteenth century people, free, intelligent, and able to take care of ourselves. What is it to us how the Papacy has stood, or now stands, in politics?" Well, let us reflect. Our country is new, and in many respects prosperous. The Papacy has, as every one acquainted with history knows, repeatedly tried to get a hold on such regions. Would it be strange if a like effort were put forth in regard to the United States? Would it surprise one if His Holiness should profess the warmest admiration for our institutions and affection for our people, and if our resident prelates should loudly and ostentatiously announce their sympathy with our people and our policy?

Suppose we had two great opposing parties so nearly balanced in numbers that a body of six or seven millions in the care, and under the guidance of the Papacy, could decide the vote for one or the other as it was directed, would it be strange, or against history if the power should be used in this way: You promise to do such and such things for us, when in power, and we shall see that you get the power? The point might not be specifically stated; but there are other ways of conveying ideas than by set and articulate speech.

Would it be extraordinary and unprecedented, if the Papacy should say: "By common consent the State is not to be obeyed when it rules that which is contrary to the

will of the Creator. So Paul and Peter taught and acted. Now the Holy See is the judge—the infallible judge of what is right and according to the divine will.” Would it be strange if vexatious annoyances came up in this way, touching for example, charities, education, and forms of taxation? Suppose an element of discontented population among us making trouble for civil rulers, would it be a surprise to the student of the history of the past to find some such hints as this coming from the Vatican: “We have the consciences of these people under our control. There are certain claims of ours not recognized by your government. Let them be recognized, and we shall bring this discontented element into quiet and submission”?

But it is not needful to follow further this line of speculation. We do not fear the placing of this nation where other nations have often been to their real injury. But, a long way on this side of absolute victory over a nation, there may be inconveniences, losses, and hardships which foresight and firmness might have averted. A ship may not indeed be wrecked, but she may be terribly shaken, and her passengers made extremely uncomfortable, when prudent precaution might have kept her out of the line of the hurricane. It is not very strange that busy Americans building up national institutions and industries in hot haste, and committed to the loftiest views of rights to conscience should know little of remote histories, and should shun anything that looks like “being cool to a man on account of his religion.” We too want nothing but charity and justice; but we would fain have the people who make public opinion, choose rulers and accept or reject national policies, study the past, face the facts of the case, and be on their guard against developments of fallen human nature, organized into historic agencies that have been despotic where they ruled, and that have been vexatious and disturbing where they had only partial and occasional influence.