

"CATHOLICITY AND METHODISM." *

Mr. Roy's pamphlet, from the startling nature of many of its arguments and conclusions, has already won a wide celebrity. It contains many just, noble, and generous sentiments, expressed in eloquent language. But it contains also, we judge, much sophistical, fallacious, and dangerous reasoning, which would, if followed to its logical conclusion, lead to much wider divergence from the general belief of Christendom as founded on the Scriptures than we hope the author either intends or would wish. Of course in a brief article we cannot undertake a formal refutation of what we conceive to be the errors of the book—that would require a treatise of itself. We would be recreant to our duty, however, if we did not record our protest against the erroneous and, as we think, dangerous doctrines. The genial spirit, the elegant scholarship, the eloquent language of the accomplished author, as manifested in this pamphlet, must not prevent the conscientious discharge of a bounden duty.

The avowed purpose of the book is to show the limits within which private judgment may be exercised in the Methodist ministry according to the "legal standards," but in the discussion of this subject a very wide range of topics is traversed and certain doctrinal statements are unmistakably expressed. It is asserted that Methodism was originally extremely catholic in its organization, imposing no doctrinal opinions whatever upon its members. It is further maintained that in course of time Methodism lost its original catholicity through the following causes:—1. "An imperfect development of its conceptions of God's love,

and consequently, of its brotherly sympathies for men." 2. "A narrowing of the organic form of the Societies, corresponding to that of the inward thoughts and feelings of those Societies."

In attempting to answer the question, "Can Methodism become catholic again?" the author calls attention to certain alleged discrepancies of Wesley's early and later views, and to an alleged want of harmony of the Methodist standards of doctrine. Modern "orthodoxy" is then examined under four heads: The Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement, and Retribution, and the author endeavours to show by citations from "orthodox" writers that the doctrines now generally held, on some at least of these subjects, were not originally derived from the Scriptures, but were, or at least the current explanations of these doctrines were, the slow growth of centuries of Christian thought.

We, of course, admit that the science of theology, the grouping and arranging of Christian doctrine into a symmetrical system, was the work of the early Apologists and defenders of Christianity against the heresies by which it was assailed. Many of these Apologists had themselves turned from the dreams of pagan philosophy to the Gospel of Christ, and many of them sealed their testimony with their blood as witnesses for the truth as it is in Jesus. But the doctrines, the "dogmas," if one chooses to call them so, were in the Gospel just as the symmetrical crystal is in solution in the liquid out of which, by the polar forces of nature, it is afterwards crystallized. It is true that Athanasius and the Alexandrian school,

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