

Catholic Churches of the East and West, the Greek and the Latin communions. In spite of jealousies, these two great historical bodies have a natural affinity for one another. They equally claim to represent the Church of the apostles: and in their radical conception of Christian salvation they are at one. Opposed to these two Catholic churches are ranged a crowd of smaller bodies; some of them, in their existing shape, four centuries old, and others much newer; some representing the faith of great nations, and others with a mere handful of adherents; yet all agreed in the main upon a theory of Christianity which flatly contradicts the Catholic one. I propose to enquire to-day how this Reformed or Protestant or Evangelical theory of salvation (whichever you please to term it) is contrasted with the Greek and Latin one. But you may take it at the outset for granted that all the non-Catholic Churches—however they may differ among themselves—are on the whole cut off from the Catholic ones by yet deeper and wider differences. So that (as I began by saying) Christendom is split in two by this main cleft—a divergence of opinion on what the religion is that Christ founded.

At the same time it is of great consequence to see at the outset that the division, although a deep one, is yet *inside* the Christian camp. It is not like the bounding exterior fosse, with ramparts, which guards the whole of the Christian enclosure, and marks it off from the non-Christian or unbelieving world outside. In other words, Catholics and Protestants have far more in common, after all, than either of them has with the anti-Christian beliefs or deniers of belief who are outside the pale of Christ's Church altogether. For, although the points in controversy betwixt the Latin and the Reformed communions are of immense importance, they are not so important as the underlying doctrines on which they are agreed. We shall presently see wherein we differ; let us for a moment recollect how far we agree. We agree in most of the peculiar and vital dogmas of the Christian faith. We agree in holding that God has supernaturally revealed His will to mankind for our salvation, and that we possess in Holy Scripture the record of that revelation. We agree in worshipping the mysterious Trinity of Persons within the unity of the ever blessed Godhead. We agree in believing that the Second Person assumed our human nature by the Miraculous Conception, and is forever one mysterious Person with two natures, unconfounded and unchanged, yet joined in inseparable union. We agree in confessing all the leading-facts of Christ's saving work—His incarnation, His sinless obedience, His vicarious expiating death, His resurrection, His ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost. We all equally regard His Passion as an atoning sacrifice offered for the sins of the world. We all equally believe in the perpetual presence of Christ in His Church through the invisible indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We all regard as valid means of grace the two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. And we all look for our Lord's return to judge the world, for the resurrection of the dead, for the eternal punishment of the wicked, and for the everlasting felicity of the saints in Heaven. On many of these great doctrines it is true that Catholic and Reformed theology diverge in some minor details, yet as far as the Central nucleus of Christian teaching and Christian believing are concerned we have here a very large amount common to both, and not shared by any who are not Christians. I cannot conceive what makes some people anxious to pare down to a minimum the *consensus* of Christendom. To my mind it is one of the most encouraging and hopeful of facts.

But our business to-day is with the *differences*,

and these stand in no need of exaggeration; they are sufficiently serious of themselves. When I strive to penetrate to the bottom of this chief division betwixt Christendom Catholic and Christendom Reformed, and ask myself, where do their respective theories of the Christian religion diverge? I get some such answer as this: the Catholic Church puts in the foreground, as the great channel of God's mercy to me, the Society which Jesus founded. It makes *the Church the primary thing*, and the intermediary link betwixt man's Saviour and each individual who needs salvation. According to this theory, what Christ did was to found a sacred society and make it the depository of Heaven's favor; so that whoever keeps himself in orderly connection with that society is sure of grace and salvation, but no one else. Practically, therefore, what the individual has to do is to see that he is and remains a faithful son of Mother Church. He is referred at every turn of his spiritual experience to her officials. These officials are divinely constituted intermediaries betwixt me and Heaven. In their hand rests an ample apparatus of grace, of which they alone possess the monopoly. This apparatus of spiritual appliances covers the entire life of a Christian from his birth to his grave. Give yourself into the care of Christ's privileged ministers, do as they tell you, employ faithfully all their means of grace, and you will be led on from step to step of Christian life, regenerated in baptism, anointed with the Spirit, disciplined or corrected when you go wrong, fed with celestial nutriment in the sacrament, and finally absolved or sealed for Heaven on your death-bed. To be thus true to the ministry of the Church—her obedient faithful son—is to be in a state of salvation. To forsake her pale or to be expelled from it is to be lost.

To this very foursquare and consistent theory, Protestantism opposes another which is its direct contrary. According to Reformed Christendom, there is *no such intermediary* betwixt the Saviour and the sinner. The Christian Society cannot possibly hold any such place, because it does not, in point of fact, come first in order; it comes second. The first or initial fact was of old, and continues to be, a sinner, needy, criminal, and penitent, called to Jesus by His personal word and coming to Him by personal faith. Given any number of such persons uniting in the allegiance to Him and you have the Church, a holy and useful society, in which dwells the Spirit of its exalted Head, but not of necessity the channel of grace betwixt the Head and each member; for it is the junction of believing members which makes the Church, not the Church which makes the Christian. In short, Protestant teaching begins by getting each soul into *immediate personal contact with Jesus Christ* as its Object of faith, Source of life, and Guide of conduct. The officials of the Church it turns from intermediaries into helps, from priests (that is) into ministers, and insists upon it that salvation hinges not upon my dutifully employing the Church's apparatus of grace, but on my personally trusting, loving and obeying Christ alone. An immense train of consequences has been developed out of this radical difference of view, making the subject complex. But I think this is the radical point of divergence: for the present we must confine ourselves to it.

Looking now at these two theories for the purpose of comparison, it strikes one that the difference lies less in the *doctrines* of Christ's religion than in the *method* by which His salvation reaches us. To the Catholic and to me alike Jesus our Lord remains the same Divine human Person by whose meritorious death we have been redeemed. To both the operation of the Divine Spirit is essential to salvation, only we differ as to those human conditions

which bring into my soul the atoning virtue of the Saviour's death and the quickening power of the Spirit's life. These, he thinks, reach him through the hands of the one true Church and her officers; I think they reach me direct, so soon as I approach my Saviour with personal desire and faith.

But though the difference touches our creed far less than it does our experience, yet practically it is found to be a difference fraught with immense consequences. Each theory generates a type of piety of its own. It colors the whole of Christian experience with its own complexion. It shifts the centre of gravity in the whole system. Either theory, of course, may be run to an extreme or it may be held in moderation. And the Christians who on either side are most moderate will approach one another pretty closely. Yet even when good men of the two communions are most alike, it will be found that they look at things with different eyes in a thousand minute particulars, just because they have set out from these different theories of Christianity. Next, it cannot fail to strike you that between churches holding such views *mutual toleration is impossible*. I can tolerate the Roman or the Greek Catholic indeed, because, though I think he attaches far too much consequence to the Church, yet I have no doubt he can and often does reach our Saviour through the Church. I may think he would reach Christ far better, more simply, more joyfully, by just going to Him at first hand as I try to do. Still, I need not deny to my Lord the power to use His Church and her means of grace if He choose, or to welcome with His saving mercy the honest longing soul which comes to Him only by that route. Therefore I can greet as my fellow-Christians every Catholic who loves our Lord in sincerity. Unhappily he cannot do the same by me, for his theory is an exclusive one. If the Church be Christ's one ordained channel of grace, then to live outside her pale, still more to refuse her ministry, to be a heretic and a schismatic like me, means to be beyond the ordinary hope of salvation. This is an awkward conclusion for the Church of Rome. To have to draw it must put her at a great disadvantage. She is forced to unchurch, every non-Catholic communion: and she does it. Of course, this isolates her in Christendom; and that isolation, which in other days, when she was strong, may have added to her strength, will now, as she grows feebler, increase her feebleness. To see a Church environed with purer churches refusing to recognize them, nailing her colours to the mast as the sole bearer of salvation for mankind, and if she must sink amid the laughter and incredulity of modern Europe, prepared to go down with her old haughty claim to a monopoly of truth and grace unlowered—this is a strange sight—not without a pathetic tragic dignity.

To be continued.

British & Foreign News.

ENGLAND.

The Moody Mission at Stepney, London, is thus described:—The portable hall used by Messrs. Moody and Sankey in London was erected a short distance from Stepney Green, and is capable of accommodating about 6,000 persons. The chairman of the local committee is the Rev. J. F. Kitto, the rector of Stepney Church; about 130 stewards under the curate of Stepney Church; the choir consisted of about 300 voices; many of the workers are those who took part in the meetings at Islington; there has been a general visitation from house to house, and distribution of tickets for admission to the services, and a large number of copies of the article from the *Pall Mall Gazette* regarding the meetings at Islington have been printed for distribution in the shops and factories in the district. The workers placed themselves among the audience, and the utmost decorum prevailed; the doors were kept closed during the

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