

THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH.

the antecedent and cause of what is invisible and spiritual in the life of the Church.

The philosophical Roman Divine, Moehler, gives what he calls "a short, accurate, and definite expression" of "the differences between the Catholic and the Lutheran view of the Church." "The Catholics," he says, "teach the visible Church is first; then comes the invisible. The former gives birth to the latter. On the other hand, the Lutherans say the reverse; from the invisible emerges the visible Church; and the former is the groundwork of the latter. In this apparently very unimportant opposition," he emphatically adds, "a prodigious difference is avowed."*

The sacerdotal doctrine admits, indeed, that there is, or ought to be, in the Church an inner life and spiritual realities invisible to the human eye; but it looks upon these spiritual realities as merely accidental or subsidiary, and not at all essential to the existence of the Church, which, it asserts, depends upon what is external and visible in its organization and ordinances.†

The evangelical doctrine, on the contrary, affirms that the being of the Church lies in what is invisible and spiritual, and that its visibility is the result and manifestation and not the ground and basis of the former. Herein we find the crucial difference between the two systems, as Moehler himself affirms, a difference which is fraught with the most radical and far-reaching consequences. It is therefore of vital moment to ascertain which of these theories represents the true idea of the Church, Christ's idea of it.

Let us, accordingly, first briefly discuss the grounds upon which the Evangelical theory rests, and then enquire into the origin and effects of the opposite and antagonistic doctrine.

*Moehler's *Symbolik*, § 48.

† This is indisputably the position of the Oxford Tractarian School. Liddon asserts (*A Father in God*, 2nd ed., p. 13) that the Episcopate is "organically necessary to the structure of the visible body of Christ,"—"necessary not merely to its *bene esse*, but to its *esse*." See, also, Gore's "The Church and the Ministry," pages 64, 65, 86, etc.