

but it was sunk in slumber and sadly begrimed; the truth was there, but it was obscured and buried; nay, the truth was in Churches long before the Reformation—in the Waldensian and in the Apostolic Church—but it was lost sight of, caricatured, and unproclaimed for centuries previous to the Reformation. In 1514, the highest ecclesiastical power gave forth that the whole world was subject to Rome. No doubt, in the worst times there were witnesses, and, in Rome itself, believers. In his interesting history, D'Aubigne tells us that the monk in his cloister and the nun in her convent recognized Jesus Christ as the only and all-sufficient Saviour—that the gospel, like leaven, had penetrated hearts in the cell—and that, even in the height of Rome's power and glory, Christ's hidden ones were there. This is cheering, and shows us, that, in every Church and age, God has his little flock; yet that abates not from the statement that darkness covered the land, and gross darkness the people, insomuch so that the way of salvation and holiness was lost sight of. The momentous question of a sinner's justification was shrouded or unknown, and the subject of a Saviour's merits was made merchandize of. When Tetzel, the Pope's delegate, went about with his iron chest, selling, for money, pardons, he offered, without scruple, to redeem a soul from purgatory that had been guilty of committing the grossest vices; and when Luther, in his enthusiasm, went to Rome, he found, where he had hoped was a paradise, a page of unclean birds. Both in morals and doctrine, the Church was then corrupt. I can compare the Church then to nothing but the pernicious nightshade that infects the very atmosphere, and men and beasts die from its influence. Such was Popery; killing where it conquered, and enslaving mind and nations. But the Reformation was like the Banyan tree of India, whose roots are so many, and whose shelter is so great; healthful is its influence, and beneficent its shade; its shelter it has extended even to us, and cast its covering over our land, so that we sit under our vine and fig tree worshipping and enjoying what our ancestors, three centuries ago, possessed not. And shall we be ungrateful for the arbour, or ascribe to another that which is due to it? Nay, let our right hand forget its cunning, if we do ought to make its shelter less, or decline in gratitude for its refuge! But that tree to which I have likened the Reformation had a tap-root, or principal one, which sustained all the others. So, too, has the Reformation, namely, *Justification by Faith*. Around that, cluster the other roots, and from it grow the fruits of Christianity. Destroy that root, and not one of the others will be able to keep the tree alive: wound it, and you have inflicted a deadly blow that cannot be healed; expose or neglect it, and you leave the good old tree to die. In other words, Justification by Faith

was the capital doctrine of the Reformation, the pillar of the restored Church, the root from which grew its Articles and its fruits, the salt which preserves and gives season to its doctrines and worship. Now, that doctrine was reawakened by the Reformation. It was dug out of the Bible, cleaned and burnished, and set in the Church to glitter as a jewel, or, as the Koh-i-noor, to give light to all that are in the house. And we call that event, which restored these and kindred precious truths, a reformation, and not an eruption, as the Romanists would represent it, for the obvious reason that it was the clearing away of the rubbish and the re-modelling of the building—the removing of the scaffolding and setting up of the new temple. It was not a mere modification or a slight alteration, but a renovation of Apostolic doctrine and discipline. Instead of the old building whose reformation its masters were unable to effect, came forth the new edifice, built upon the foundation of the Word of God, Christ crucified being the corner-stone, and the top-stones laid with shoutings of “by grace saved.”

Thus is there a complete alienation between the two Churches—a separation, but not a sinful schism—a parting on the ground of fundamental and incurable error. Had less than a separation done, inward reform would have sufficed; but Luther found this impossible. No half-way house and no compromise betwixt the claims of tradition and the papacy, on the one hand, and conscience and the Word of God, on the other. Therefore, he and his coadjutors protested. Since that date, A. D. 1530, to this, the two Churches have been most opposite, and, like men that have parted at cross roads, each has chosen its own path. The Reformed has never thought of returning, and the Church of Rome glories in being unchangeable. As well might the iron and the clay of Daniel's vision coalesce, as the error and truth of the two Churches amalgamate. Mixture there cannot be. Independently of the fundamental subject of Justification by Faith, there are invocation of the Virgin, purgatory, obedience to the Roman Pontiff, and prohibition of reading of the scriptures,—all excluding the Church of Rome from communion with Protestants. And there are, on the part of the latter, protests against the “Man of Sin,” as our Confession styles the head of that Church; and a denunciation of the system as anti-christian which repels its advances. If so, union is impracticable, if not undesirable. One or other must cast off its allegiance, and throw out the scriptures—the real bone of contention—ere any approximation can take place. And whether is to do that? We look for a very different issue of the Great Apostacy from that propounded by a Halifax paper when giving its critique upon an essay delivered in that city lately, viz.: “the union of the two diverse creeds, which the lecturer predicted as likely eventually to take place.”