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THE
TRUE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN REUNION.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE
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BY

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NOTE.

A very few verbal alterations have been made in the following paper, and one or two short notes added on points raised in the discussion after it was read. It is printed in accordance with a suggestion made by some who heard it: but as it was not written for publication, it has seemed better not to publish it.

THE REUNION OF CHRISTENDOM.

I WILL waste as little time as may be, in apologizing for my existence, my way of life, and my presence here to-day. But something must be said in the way of apology, and said at the beginning, as it will help to make clear the line I propose to take in considering this question. I come here, then, in answer to the kind invitation of your Committee, to consider a question, which has come before me probably in a way very different from that in which it presses upon you. With you I imagine it is largely a question of pressing practical importance. The disunion of Christendom affects your work in your parishes, and complicates all the questions to which parish-life gives rise. Education, Temperance, other social and moral movements are all complicated—where indeed complication would seem to be the last thing necessary—by difficulties with Dissenters. Are we to go on to the same platforms with them? Are we to put aside our differences in matters where all who claim the title of Christian would seem to be necessarily at one—or are our differences so vital and significant that they must affect our view of the ordinary problems of moral life? These are ways in which the question of reunion does not, from the nature of the case, touch me. And I do not, therefore, wish to attempt an answer to them. Living as one does in the atmosphere of a University, one is not called on for decisions upon such points, as a rule: nor, in the present conditions of University life, is any decision which might be reached on such a question of any interest for any one outside the University. When I add to this that I have hitherto refrained from availing myself of the exceptional advantages—in the way of salubrious air, economical hotel-tariffs, and miscellaneous conversation on deep subjects—which, I understand, are offered at the Grindelwald Conferences, you will see at once that it would be unwise to expect anything of me but an academic and theoretical discussion of the question.

It is, of course, impossible not to be aware, even in Oxford, that the question of reunion is in the air. The recent utterances of Cardinal Vaughan, the Grindelwald Conference itself, and many other discussions in many other places, make it impossible to ignore the growth of a movement towards reunion. And, I suppose, experience in English parishes, and still more in the colonies and the mission field, leave no doubt that reunion is desirable. It is therefore impossible not to have some opinion on the subject,—impossible to avoid asking oneself whether the thing may not be attainable, and, if so, upon what terms. It is upon this latter point—the conditions and terms of any reunion—that I wish to concentrate attention to-day. And if it seems unpractical, or presumptuous to face so comprehensive a question, let me remind you that it is extremely desirable to be clear where we are going before we set out upon our travels. However earnestly we may desire reunion we cannot, we dare not desire it, at the expense of impoverishing the life of the Church, by surrendering any vital truths.

And the danger of such surrender of vital truth is no imaginary one. It seems very easy, in the presence of the frightful evils which disunion causes, to remedy the difficulty by dropping the points of difference. It is not hard to understand that men who care for the welfare of humanity and see how souls which the Church was meant to refresh and save, are deprived of their natural food and made to wander in desert places—that these should be inclined to say, “Let us at all costs put an end to this intolerable position: what are a few more or a few less doctrines in comparison with the welfare of souls: let us become all things to all men that we may by all means save some.” This is a natural position, I think; but it is a fatally hasty and superficial one. As applied to the questions which divide Churches it is unworthy of the subject-matter and it is unworthy of the dignity of men. Men do not quarrel for ages about nothing: or at least they do not do so on a national and historic scale. A difference about a boundary will sometimes separate two families for a generation or two: but it is something real and of tenacious vitality that avails

to separate sections of men for centuries. The rough-and-ready solution of the difficulty, then, is unworthy and superficial: but though it is both of these things in no small degree it will serve to draw our attention to a truth frequently passed by.* The truth in question is, that in all controversy it is always the *suppressed matter* of the discussion, which is of real importance. The points selected to quarrel over, the particular modes and occasions of the discussion, are often simply incidents of the whole matter: they are the signs on the surface of a far more serious divergence underneath. In controversy the occasion meets the eye, the cause lies in the suppressed matter. It would not be hard to illustrate this truth from history. To go back into ancient days, it was a small difference that separated those who held the Homoousion from those who held the Homoiousion. But it would have been a very superficial observer who would look for the real explanation of this difference in the desire to add or omit this one letter. The truth is, of course, that the external difference which was discussed and fought over so earnestly and, at times, so acrimoniously would never have availed to divide any two men, not to mention bodies of men, if it had not been that it was the symbol of a real and tremendous difference which underlay it. In such a case to adopt the rough-and-ready course of action—for both parties to surrender their distinctive formula, in favour of one which should offend neither, would have been to surrender truth. It was a question in which one side was right and the other wrong, and nothing but the admission of this fact would have satisfied the conditions of the case.

And what is more, such a solution could never have been lastingly successful. The difference which broke out then—and it is typical of hundreds which have come out since—represents a different view of things, a difference in the general attitude of minds, which is only glossed over and concealed by an external agreement, and is not put away. Hence it remains unmodified and will break out in the

* For the phrase in which I shall express this truth I am indebted to Dr. Martineau (Essays, vol. I., p. 159).

end in a new form, startling and disturbing the order which seemed to be so easily and firmly established.

It is, therefore, I contend, idle and misleading to talk of reunion between the various opposing elements in the existing Church of Christ except upon the basis of a review of the points of difference and an enquiry into the real occasions of dispute—the suppressed matter of controversy—which is so often hidden, and so inevitably ranges men upon opposite sides in such very various connexions. The question for us, which has hope in it,—though it is far the hardest and makes far the heaviest demand on patience and insight and studious labour,—is the question whether there are any points where there is radical opposition of opinion, and whether in this region there is any possibility of easing the strain of variance. The practical issue, whether upon this or that subject we can take our stand side by side with those who differ from us may be distressing and difficult; but it is not the question of reunion. We might decide to act as often as we like with Dissenters, and yet leave the real points in controversy as far from solution as ever.

Roughly speaking, the English Church stands conspicuously in opposition to the Roman Catholics on one side, and the various Protestant bodies on the other: the Eastern Church, which in some respects offers the best hopes of reunion, must be left on one side on the present occasion. If, then, we propose seriously to grapple with the question of reunion, it will mean for us, how are we going to face the differences between ourselves and these various Christian bodies? What, in the last resort is the basis of the difference of opinion? Is this or is it not, a difference which shows any prospect of being reconciled?

I. I will consider the Protestant sects first, by which, of course, I mean, those bodies which broke off from communion with the Western Church in general at the Reformation, and were formed *de novo* at that period. Of these there are, from our point of view, two widely different classes: (1) those which in no sense profess the Creed as we receive it, (2) and those which professing virtually the whole Creed, departed at their start from the traditional order and discipline of the ancient Church. Of course, the actual points in

controversy between the English Church and these several bodies are very various. But, roughly speaking, we may affirm that the differences are either theological, or disciplinary, though I hope to shew that these are not so far remote from one another as might seem. (1) The chief doctrinal difference is connected with the Doctrine of God and divides Unitarians from all who believe in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Of course this is in one sense an absolutely final point of difference, if we can be sure that the two opposing parties are talking of the same thing. The question of the Divinity of Christ is a question of fact, upon which two contradictory answers are impossible. And if two parties, looking at the same facts and considering them without bias, arrive at opposite conclusions there can be no solution of the controversy, except the surrender of one of the parties. But it must not hastily be assumed that the questions are being faced precisely in the same way on both sides. In degrees which vary greatly amongst different thinkers, the suppressed matter of controversy is not the mere question whether the Word was Incarnate in Palestine at a particular period in time, but whether the conception of God admits of the possibility of an Incarnation.* To some minds, God exists simply as a first Cause: a being whose existence must be assumed in order to prevent an infinite regress in the line of causation. It is not possible, men think, to go continuously back from effect to cause, and from effect to cause again, without any point of final arrest: and thus they assume a first Cause, adequate to produce all the succeeding results. To this the name of God is given; and with the name there follow a varying number of moral and religious associations. Again, there are others who have passed beyond this vague

* The exigencies of space forbid me to enter upon the historical questions between us and the Unitarians. And I omit them with the less regret because they are strictly secondary to those raised above. If the Incarnation is *a priori* and in theory impossible, no historical evidence, however good and full, would be adequate to prove it. On the other hand, if it is possible in theory, the historical evidence may be estimated on its own merits, simply as historical evidence, without being confused by *a priori* considerations. It would greatly help towards clearness in weighing the evidence for the Christian Faith, if these two aspects of it—the metaphysical and the historical—were more accurately distinguished.

metaphysical conception to something ethically more attractive. The God in whom they believe is personal; has an interest in the life of men and the order of the world, is moral and interested in the moral condition of individual souls: more than all things, is benevolent with a benevolence that cannot ever long maintain an indignant demeanour, but is easily appeased by penitence and tears. Such an idea of God is on the whole the best of unitarian types: but to such a point of view the sternness of the Gospel is repellent. It cannot understand why Christians think so seriously of the gravity of sin, as to demand for its obliteration the sacrifice of the Cross. The whole scheme of redemption seems to those who hold this view savage and unnecessary. And as for the Incarnation, every man is in some sense a manifestation of the Divine Existence: the Nicene doctrine of the Incarnation is merely a metaphysical fancy.

It is clear that these are in some sense the best of the Unitarians. There is something living and warm and worshipful about the God in whom they believe. And though it is true that there is and can be no logical or metaphysical justification for the existence of such a Being: though, that is, His connexion with the world and man can never be satisfactorily made out: yet it is easy to represent this as a comparatively unimportant detail. On all points of moral practice and worship they are so closely in agreement with ourselves, that we are inclined to ask whether a mere matter of metaphysics ought to continue to divide us. But, as a matter of fact, it is no small flaw in their position. It means that their practice is better than their theory, indeed, that in the end they have no logical defence for their theory at all. For bare Monotheism is not a possible type of belief any longer. The belief that God is capable of caring for the world means in the end that He is capable of saving it. The belief that God is Love in His own Nature forbids us from thinking of Him in lonely isolation without any object of His Love but the world that He Himself created, of which the character is temporary. Either we must infer from such a belief that the world is eternal and is the proper complement of the Divine Nature—*i.e.*, that without it God Himself is not perfect, and this is one form of Pantheism—

or we must sever Him from the world in the remote isolation of the Deistic First Cause. The belief in one God is not rationally tenable, except in the form of Trinitarianism : and this we reach only through the Incarnation. When the Incarnation is rejected, therefore, on *a priori* grounds—*i.e.*, as being impossible—the real ground of the controversy lies below the surface : it is a question not of the doctrine of the Incarnation in itself, but of the whole nature of God, and His relation to the world. It will be idle, then, to look for a solution of the difficulties and differences between us and Unitarians in any region that leaves the doctrine of God untouched. No plan, by which we say a little less about Christ and the others say a little more, will really bring us together. For the difference which is obvious to the eye, runs back upon a fundamental difference in our whole point of view.

(2) I suppose this conclusion will be readily admitted by almost every one here : but that I shall run the risk of incurring the charge of bigotry and narrowness of mind, if I say that much the same is true of the differences between ourselves and the so-called orthodox Protestant sects. For it is popularly maintained that these differences are external : and it is popularly assumed that that which is external is also unessential. Let us pause for a moment before we accept this identification. That all unessential things are external to the real centre and core of the faith we may readily admit : but is it true that all external things are also unessential ? Surely not : unless we assume that there is no natural link between the motions of the soul, and the outward expression of them—unless we assume that man's soul is a single individual atom, without necessary relations to other men, without any necessary demand resting upon him for self-expression and influence upon the outer world. *If* we assume all this—if we separate man from his kind, and divorce his inner from his outer life, then we may fairly believe that his religious life will be exhausted in his private intercourse with God, and that there is no absolute need for any religious organization, in which his essentially social life must develop on its religious side. It is only, I repeat, to a purely individualistic conception of manhood that a religion

is tolerable without external organization, without a common worship in which the whole community joins *as* a community, and not as a loose lot of individuals who have arranged to say their private prayers in public. It is, of course, possible to hold this individualistic theory of life, and yet to submit to an organization of a more or less solid character. In fact, one may say broadly that no sect in Christendom has ever succeeded in carrying out this theory to its logical conclusion.* And, on the other hand, there is to be found in the English Church a considerable body of people, whose *theory* of religion is indistinguishable from that just described: though they formally comply with the external order, and gain by it; they express themselves as being indifferent to it, and assert their indifference in various ways—*e.g.*, by repeating all the priest's part of the service in an audible whisper. But, though it is possible to separate thus theory and practice, the objections to and even the indifference to external order spring ultimately from a different conception of human nature, its needs and possibilities, to that which finds a ready and natural expression in a common religious life and worship. And it is in this region that our real controversy lies, I think, with all the orthodox Protestant sects except Presbyterianism.† For that body insists no less than we do on the need of an organization, though the organization adopted, and, still more the method of religious observance prevailing, lends itself to a more individualistic view of man than seems to me consistent with the practice of the Church of England. And thus, however large our charity and sympathetic our de-

* I suppose, the Quakers and possibly the Anabaptists—a very different class of people—came nearest doing so in their original forms: and, in modern times, Dr. Martineau maintains it in theory, apparently regarding public worship, &c., as a concession. See his preface to *Home Prayers*.

† The discussion between the English Church and the Kirk of Scotland is largely historical: and therefore falls beyond the scope of this paper. At the same time, I think that the polity of the Kirk was determined by a view of the Sacraments, of the value of an external order, and of the functions of ministers, which has more in common with Protestantism pure and simple, than with any body, which has clung to the historic discipline of the Church. The fact that Anglicanism is *established* in England and Presbyterianism in Scotland complicates the whole matter rather seriously. It gives an air of arbitrariness to the differences between the two bodies and suggests that the disabilities of a member of the Scotch Establishment when he comes South of the Tweed, are of merely legal value. But there is probably considerable likelihood that these two bodies will, in time, draw together.

meanour, however successful we may be in reconciling individuals, we shall not succeed in reuniting Churches, except upon the basis of a decision upon the real point in controversy : i.e., upon the nature of man and the true method of its self-expression.

We differ, then, from the various bodies to which I have alluded—in two directions prominently : in regard of the Doctrine of God and in regard of the doctrine of man. But these two are not so separate as might appear at first sight. There is often a hidden logic in things which really connects opinions and ideas, even when they do not openly suggest close connexion. And there is a compatibility and rather more than a compatibility—a suggestion of connexion, between the individualistic view of man and the more sterile view of God. From the point of view I have last mentioned man stands as a lonely individual before God. His whole religious horizon is occupied by this one relation. In the words of Dr. Newman (describing his earliest religious ideas), such a person, at his highest, “ rests in the thought of two and only two supreme and luminously self-evident beings,” himself and the Creator. Beyond this the whole world is in some degree irrelevant : in the case of Newman it ‘ confirmed ’ him in his mistrust of the reality of material phenomena. This was a result which, I suppose, is hardly intelligible to most of us : but it is logical. The soul which thus isolates itself from all its natural environment, if it is serious in its convictions loses hold of the world. From regarding outward things as unessential, from turning aside from and ignoring the gradual manifestation of God in history it comes to restrict the action of God to a personal relation with itself and other souls. Nature, history, the Church, from being thought unnecessary to God’s self-revelation, come to be regarded as barriers—obstacles to its freedom. The same measure is applied to the Bible, where that is still retained. The prophets and holy men of old tend to be regarded as passive vehicles of the Divine Inspiration : the human element in their writings is minimized and in the end disappears. So more and more the close presence of God is removed from the world. Some will still maintain that He interferes with the course of nature, sus-

pend its law, and works miracles—for the most part leaving the world to the operation of ordinary laws. Until at last the question is raised, Why is this complex scheme of Redemption necessary? How can it affect the relations of the lonely soul and God? Will not God be satisfied when the soul turns to Him in tears and penitence? And with these questions the link is forged which binds bare individualism in regard of man with the sterile Unitarian conception of God. Belief in the Incarnation is bound up, when we press it to the last, with the belief in the true unity of mankind, in the manifestation of God continuously in history: and that will mean in the end, with belief in the necessity of the existence of His historic Church. And if this seems startling at first sight, it will not seem so to a more thoughtful gaze. It is surely a strange thing to believe about God that a large portion of His activity is unessential. With all His Bounty in dealing with man, He is also, if I may use the phrase, wonderfully parsimonious. Men of science tell us of the parsimony of nature, of the narrow margin of bare sufficiency within which the life of animals is made to work: it is a common reflection, for instance, that the organization of a human being is only just sufficient to keep him alive, and seems to run very close to dangerous economy. And as with nature, so it is in the Kingdom of Grace. Man is given enough to save him, and not more. And unless we are prepared to deny altogether that God is at work in the historic Church, we cannot but regard it as necessary to God's Plan. The one thing it cannot be—and the same may be said of the whole scheme of God's self-revelation—the one thing it cannot be is non-essential. It hangs together: it is necessary or it is nothing.

It seems to me, then,—looking at things in the somewhat theoretical way which is habitual with me,—that our differences with Dissenters—orthodox and Unitarian—are great and of vital importance. When expressed in their final form, they are differences as to the Nature of God and the Nature of man and the essential relations between them. In saying this, I am certain that I am not distorting the facts or magnifying tendencies to disagreement. I know well, of course, that there is every variety of strange combinations in men's con-

victions—that imagination, old association, lack of thoroughness in logic and in insight prevent the suppressed matter of controversy from being the acknowledged subject of dispute. But though this is true, I believe that Unitarianism itself arose (through an intellectual development such as I have sketched) out of the Individualism which prevailed after the Reformation in a sect which originally had no idea of departing from the faith: and I am sure that if I have been in any degree accurate in my view reunion is and will remain impossible unless people will face and come to agreement upon the points on which they really differ.

But it is time that I passed from the question of the Dissenters to that of the Roman Catholics. So far as we are in earnest about reunion, our hopes must include reunion with Rome—the see to which for so many centuries the Western Church had accorded a primacy of reverence. For the last 300 years we have been in a state of broken unity as regards this Church, as we have, on the other hand, never entered into Communion with those newly-founded sects of which I have already spoken. What is the character, then, of our differences with the Roman Church? Is there any chance here of a reopening of communion, or is the breach final and hopeless? It is very hard to discuss this question dispassionately? The cry of ‘No Popery’ is an easy one to raise, and it is popular in proportion to the uncertainty of its meaning. At the risk of appearing gratuitously paradoxical, I must say that the Roman Church seems to me to differ from the English in its method of interpreting a creed common to both, rather than in its fundamental principles of theology and metaphysic. The essence of Romanism as such seems to me to be the placing of certain logical extensions and interpretations of the Creed upon the same level with the articles of the Creed themselves. But the Creed thus treated is the one which we share with the Roman and Greek Churches—that, I mean, which we call the Nicene. So again a similar method has been applied to the usages and order of the Church with similar results. I will endeavour to establish my point by means of one or two illustrations.

I imagine that among the points of most serious difference

between us and Rome we should mention the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and the doctrine of Infallibility. I will endeavour to show what I think is the real character of our differences in these three cases. (1) I imagine that the practice of Mariolatry arises largely out of a belief in the truth of the first-named of these three doctrines: in other words, that this practice, which forms one of the most solid barriers against reunion is not a piece of wanton idolatry, but is the outcome of a belief of a particular kind. And the question then, is, What led the Roman Church to this particular belief? It seems to me to have arisen through an effort to ease by logical interpretation the great difficulty of the interruption by the Incarnation of the sinful succession from Adam. Somehow or other, the inheritance of sin which had come from our first parents is interrupted by the entry of the impeccable Word upon the line of David. There had been sins enough, in all conscience in that line: but the Child of Mary is born in it sinless and incapable of sin. The instinct of the Church has led Christians to maintain the purity and holiness of the Virgin Mother: but this belief falls short of that in an Immaculate Conception. For that means nothing less, if terms are used in their natural significance, than that in her case the succession of original sin was first interrupted, and not in that of her Divine Son. His birth, upon which indeed our hope of salvation depends, was remote from all contact with the sinful strain: for it had been already broken in the case of His Virgin Mother. I am well aware that the difficulty is great (when we really look it in the face) of explaining the possibility of the sinless Birth of Christ in a sin-stained line of men: and it is easy to see that an appearance of satisfaction comes from extending the breach of continuity over two generations. But though it may be true to say of ourselves that our only chance of sinlessness is to be born anew in Christ, we have no right to apply that principle to His Birth too, and demand that His parent also shall have been conceived without sin. The article of the Creed 'conceived by the Holy Ghost' should have prevented this misuse of logic. The nemesis of such a proceeding has been the ascription of quasi-Divine attributes

to a person to whom a quasi-Divine mode of birth had already been assigned.

(2) Something of the same kind may be said of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. In this case, starting, as all Christians must start, from the Words of Institution, a metaphysical theory has been evolved and is affirmed as being of equal authority with the fact which it professes to explain. The doctrine arose at a time when the nature and relations of Substance and Attributes were much under discussion. There were, as every one knows, two schools of thinkers on this subject—the Realists—those who held that substance—the substratum underlying attributes—was different from them and independent of them: and the Nominalists—who denied reality to anything but the facts of sense, and regarded general ideas as being merely names. And this philosophical discussion affected Eucharistic doctrine very seriously. For if nothing was real except the facts of sense, then in no way at all could the Eucharistic elements be said to *be* that which they signify. The words of our Lord were deprived of all meaning, and reduced to the level of highflown metaphor. Thus the doctrine of Transubstantiation was a justifiable protest against a materialistic philosophy: and was intended to save the truth which the Church had long held from the assaults of scepticism. It was this; but it was something more. It was also—and here was its danger,—an attempt to explain the mystery of the Eucharist in the metaphysical language of the day. And that means that it not only asserts a fact about the Eucharist, but also maintains a theory in regard of it. Hence to adopt it as part of the general tradition of the Church involves committing the Church not merely to a fact revealed to it in the Gospels, but also to a particular philosophical theory of Being. Here again, therefore, our point of departure from the Church of Rome arises after that which we believe in common. We reject the stereotyped logic and metaphysic—not the fact which these are meant to explain.

(3) The doctrine of Infallibility represents the logical outcome of a method by which a distinction of function and order is gradually stiffened and magnified almost into

a distinction of kind. All bodies which have any organization at all, carry on the work of the Church through the instrumentality of ordained ministers. That is, every organized body is managed upon the principle of the division of labour. So long as this principle and this alone is at work the ordained differ only in regard of their special commission from the multitudes of unordained lay people. The priesthood, for instance, conveys a commission to perform certain actions and nothing else: the priest does not differ in kind from any other member of Christ's Church. But upon the special Roman theory this difference of function is gradually accentuated: the common points between priest and people are gradually lost sight of: until at last there arises the conception of a separate class of men, possessing certain prerogatives absolutely, and administering at their own will the gifts of the Church for the benefit of the unprivileged—the laity. The extreme case of this unfortunate development is the Papacy. From possessing by widespread consent a primacy *inter pares* among Bishops the Bishop of Rome gradually becomes distinguished from them all. The supremacy which he administered, at first, constitutionally and in connexion with the whole body of other Bishops was exaggerated until, one by one, all the prerogatives of the Church were concentrated in the one see. The addition of Infallibility in 1870 was simply the last stage in a process which had taken centuries to develop.

These three instances will, I hope, have made plain the truth of what I said earlier, that the differences between us and Rome relate predominantly to certain extensions of truths which we hold in common. Like them we believe in Jesus Christ—conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary: we reject the attempt to give a logical and metaphysical exposition of this doctrine. Like the Church of Rome we believe that in the Sacrament of the Eucharist Christ draws near to us in exceptional closeness—gives us Himself—but we reject the formula by which this is philosophically explained. Like the Romans, like all other organized Christian bodies, we regard the priest as commissioned to perform certain functions and we deny the right to do so to persons not commissioned: but we reject the

one-sided assertion of this principle either in the form of the distinctively Roman doctrine of the priesthood or in the form of the Papal claims.

In the effort to make clear the grounds of difference, I have left myself hardly any room to explain my views as to the hope of reunion. I must now turn to this side of the question. It will be plain from what I have already said that I think seriously of the differences which separate us from Nonconformists. Indeed, if it be not too outrageous a paradox, I should be inclined to argue that, so far as mere differences go, we are infinitely nearer a reunion with Rome than with any of the various Protestant sects. Our differences with these are deep and significant, touching the very essentials of the Faith—the conditions preliminary in thought which make a definite creed and organization possible. While, on the other hand, the Romans differ in the effect they have given to the beliefs and practices which we share with them. But I am prevented from maintaining this paradox by the fact that the Romans have taken one fatal step which seems to me to have postponed reunion indefinitely. They have turned their extensions of the doctrines and practice of the Church into dogmas, which are now (since 1870) as completely necessary to Christianity as the articles of the Creed. The danger of this is twofold: it has combined under the shelter of one authority two disparate things—articles of the Faith and philosophical interpretations of them: and it has closed the door against all reconsideration of the questions: so that the whole idea of Church authority has been confused, and a permanent barrier has been erected against all change. On this side, there seems little hope of change, save through revolution. But on the side of the Protestant sects, I would speak more hopefully. It might seem as if metaphysical ideas were the last to change and the least likely region in which to look for agreement, more especially as they are not openly under discussion. But as a matter of fact, there are two tendencies at work which we shall all of us have to reckon with, and both are in the direction which we require. The one is the spread of the idea of Evolution: the other the marked development of a quasi-socialistic conception of

man. The Evolutionary idea claims to rule over all the range of human experience: and rightly, if its claims to rule anywhere are justified. And Evolution lends itself readily to the idea of a purpose slowly and gradually expressed; of a thought gradually made intelligible in and through a process of material change. And the socialistic conception of man runs in the teeth of all the narrow individualism which has so long characterized our religious and political thinking. More and more it is becoming necessary to think of man *primarily* as social—as incomplete in his manhood, until he has entered into social relations. In former days, men started with the individual and endeavoured to explain his adoption of social ties. But such theories conspicuously failed. There seems more hope of those to which the isolated individual is an abnormality: in Aristotle's phrase, ἢ θήριον ἢ θεός—either below or above the level of humanity. Neither of these two intellectual tendencies is consistent in the last resort with a theory of religion which is outside the movement of life and history, or with a theory of man which isolates him in his highest aspect from all union with his fellows. In religion as in political science man is a social animal and by degrees the inconsistency of treating him in any other light will declare itself. Indeed it has already begun to do so. And I say this in full consciousness of the fact that both Evolution and Socialistic principles are found in close contact at times with scepticism, and even atheism,—of the fact that in many quarters negative results seem to flow from the use of the evolutionary method. And I am tolerably sure that unless something unusual happens, the process of drawing together will be a long one—outlasting, perhaps, the lives even of the Junior Clergy. And mistakes will be made, as they have been made before—mistakes that will embitter and retard and hamper us. People will be, as they have been before, alarmed at the wrong things: and they will be retentive at the wrong times: stringent when they ought to be lax, and lax when they ought to be stringent. But there is all around us this impulse towards union of which I spoke at the beginning—this disdain of the barriers which hold Christian men apart, and weaken their hands in the

war with evil. And if only we can control our impatience, and not construe this heaven-sent impulse as a call to relinquish any morsel of the truth we have, we may go forward in hope: using, indeed, any means we have in our power of assuaging bitterness of feeling and laying the spirit of controversy: but for the rest trusting in the tranquil operation of God's perpetual Providence.







