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## Can Rome Unite With Us?

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Then, how necessary it is for even converted people to hear about it again and again in such a pass. I believe this is the reason why Christian people ask for the gospel as apparently they always do in war-time; it is a testimony to what Christ, the fact of Christ means to the bewildered soul. And if we can present him as did the first apostles in the historical setting as the culmination and proof of God's firm hold of the world, the one in whom all the promises are yea and Amen, then we shall at least minister to Christian confidence, and maybe create the atmosphere in which obedience can blossom and triumph. Certain it is that there can be no effective application save where the gospel itself is highly appreciated. The *kerugma* is the basis of the teaching.

All this however, is not written to excuse us from the application type of preaching. We all know the temptation—and it is a temptation—to leave that to the other fellow. We all know that gospel-preaching is more acceptable especially just now. That fact in itself makes us beware. There has to be the teaching, as well as the *kerugma*, and in the present situation there has to be much of it. The only point I raise is the proportion. How much space shall we give to each? The Christian message contains consolations as well as challenges. All consolation and no challenge leads to anæmia, and that speedily. On the other hand all challenge and no consolation depresses to the point of inertia. The scribe who is wise in the kingdom of God brings forth out of his treasure, things new and old.

A. DAKIN.

#### CAN ROME UNITE WITH US?

ONE of the outstanding features of the religious life of our time is the apparent change in attitude on the part of the Roman Church towards Protestantism in this country, as evidenced by Roman participation in many "Religion and Life Weeks" held in our cities. In some places Roman participation in united meetings has been qualified by the strict observance of Cardinal Vaughan's frank declaration "We will not pray with you, and you shall not pray with us," a qualification, so it seems to me, of the gravest implications: in other places Rome's tender conscience on this point has been appeased in some way or other. The fact remains that prayer or no prayer a willingness to appear on a united platform constitutes a remarkable change of front, and calls for serious consideration.

Indeed, in view of the warm welcome it has received by many Protestants, who read into the apparent change of front a genuine change of heart, it may not be inopportune to remind ourselves of the Rock from which we are hewn, and in particular to reacquaint ourselves with the historical circumstances in which the Protestant Reformation was wrought, and the principles for which it stood, and in the light of these facts to consider what may be our reaction to the new fact of our time.

What, then, were the circumstances in which the Reformation was wrought? On the eve of the Reformation, the long rivalry between the Papacy and the Empire had ended in a victory for the Papacy, the claim of the Pope to both spiritual and temporal power had been declared in the Gloss of Innocent IV on the Decretals. It is true that the claim to temporal power was resisted by the Emperor of Bavaria, who relied on the arguments of Marcellia of Padua, and also by the Princes at the Councils of Basle and Constance; but the Popes won the day, and as a result they came to be treated almost as gods. A contemporary epigram coined about Alexander VI is significant: "Cæsar was a great one, now Rome is greater; Sextus reigned as a man, Alexander reigns as a god!"

This autocratic power led to two far-reaching results—the secularisation of the ecclesiastic and the subjection of the believer. Dr. Kidd,\* who will

\* B. Kidd, "The Continental Reformation."

not be accounted a friend of the Reformation, provides the following facts among many others. The first Borgia Pope gave his nephew 70,000 ducats per annum from benefices. Cardinal John was given his first bishopric when he was three years old. Two clerics killed a brother of Lorenzo the Magnificent at Mass, and Sixtus IV put Florence under an interdict for putting the assassins to death. The utterances of the Popes themselves are revealing. Said Alexander: "God willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should pay and live!" Said Julius: "God has given us the Papacy; let us enjoy it!" That the immoral lives of the Popes were well known is shown by the following verse chalked up on the walls of the Vatican: "Innocent has eight sons, and as many daughters; well does Rome do to call him 'Father'!"

As to the position of the humble believer, I cannot do better than quote Professor Beard†: "The devout believer found himself in the presence of a vast organised Christianity which imposed itself upon the believer in the majesty of an unquestioned authority. It demanded his obedience under penalties, both temporal and eternal, of a tremendous kind. For all good he was the supplicant of the Church. Without her there was no access to God, no spiritual life now, no salvation hereafter." An autocratic power leading to the secularisation of the ecclesiastic from Pope to village priest, and to the complete subjection of the individual believer, such was the state of things on the eve of the Reformation. This was Rome when her life was unassailed by heretics, and her historical claims as yet undisputed.

And now, what was the nature of the Reformers' challenge? First, from out of a redeeming experience they put forth the Bible in place of the Church as the word of God to men. Luther's experience is classic. In torment for many years through believing that God demands penance for sin—for who can know if he has ever done enough penance?—the Greek New Testament came into his hand; he found that the penitencia of the Latin was the metanoia of the Greek, and that, therefore, what God requires of man is not penance but repentance. At once his life was changed. Penance had left the issue in the balance, but repentance he could give! He found the peace that comes from believing. What, then, could he say of the Book which had brought him this discovery? Must it not be the true rule for faith and life? From out of that redeeming experience he went out to put forth the Bible and not the Church as the word of God to men.

Second, and following from it, Luther in particular preached the doctrine of Justification by Faith, in place of an ultimate salvation attained by external acts. The fourth article of the Confession of Augsburg sets forth his case: "We teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merit, or works, but that they are freely justified because of Christ, by faith, when they believe that they are received into grace, and that their sins are remitted because of Christ, who by His own death has given satisfaction for our sins. This faith God reckons righteousness before Him." In a world where men were taught to believe that an ultimate salvation might be secured through a faithful observance of a long list of ritual acts, this was a fundamental challenge indeed. It made religion what it had not been, intimately personal. As Beard says: "This promise of the Gospel was made known everywhere, and once it was accepted what more was necessary? The need of a priesthood, of a visible church, even of sacraments, fell away. The whole fabric of the Roman Catholic Church tumbled to pieces under the operation of this powerful solvent. Christianity was once more a personal thing, a power within the soul, placing it in direct relation to God."

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† Charles Beard, "The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century."

Third, and closely connected with his other claims, Luther advanced, in common with Hus, Wycliffe, and the Waldenses, the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, against the prevailing sacerdotalism. What is a priest? And how is a priest made? Luther answered these fundamental questions in his typical forthright way: "All Christians," he says, † "are truly of the clergy, and among them there is no difference save of office only." It is baptism which makes a man a priest. As Baptists we cannot but discern an inconsistency in this latter claim. If, as Luther asserted, salvation is the gift of God in response to repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ, what is the function of infant baptism? What can it do? Luther, as the evidence shows, actually felt a considerable difficulty on this score, and was hard put to in his attempt to uphold Justification by Faith and Infant Baptism. But when that has been said, his claim that it is baptism which makes the priest can be understood to express the New Testament position—that all Christians are priests. Here we touch the fundamental divergence between Luther and the Roman Catholic Church. His whole system was built upon the principle of a special caste, possessing special powers, whose ministrations were absolutely essential to their people. When Luther struck at sacerdotalism, he struck at the very heart of the Roman Catholic Church. Here no compromise was possible. It was a fundamental divergence. The battle could not but be joined. Such, in brief outline, were some of the principles of the Protestant Reformation.

What, then, of this apparent change of front? Is it a genuine change of heart? Have we really ceased to be heretics in the eyes of Rome? The recent burning of Bibles in Spain does not suggest a change of heart upon that issue, while the hesitations and qualifications with which united prayer are surrounded do not indicate any fundamental change there either. And on our side, have we anything to yield over the authority of the Bible, Justification by Faith, and the Priesthood of all Believers? Are we really aiming at the same things? And can two walk together except they be agreed? As inheritors of the Protestant Reformation, for which we do not apologise, and for whose great blessings we thank God, such questions are at least worthy of consideration alongside of our desire "that they all may be one."

K. TUCKER.

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† "Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation," 1520.

### FIVE FUNDAMENTALS FOR REVIVAL.

**L**OOSE thinking often leads large sections of the Christian Church to imagine that nothing can be done in order to produce a true religious revival except to pray for it. I have never been able to accept that point of view.

We know that God *may* use the most unlikely instruments in the most unpromising times to bring about the progress of His Kingdom; but I hold that if we wish to be justified in *expecting* such progress, and to be of service in speeding its advance, there are several things to which we must attend, and to which we should attend at once.

#### I.

The first is that we and our people must understand the folk we are endeavouring to convert. We must appreciate their outlook and realise their difficulties if we are to address ourselves efficiently to the task of changing their outlook and removing their problems. To most of us who are ministers this attempt to form a just estimate of the non-Christian's attitude will probably come naturally; but it may not be so easy to all who work with us. Hence we must give thought to the matter. Otherwise