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REFORMATION YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY

REFLECTIONS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROTESTANT BREAK WITH THE MEDIEVAL ROMAN CHURCH IN DIALOGUE FORM¹

C. M. This group meets to-night to discuss the past and present significance of the Protestant break with the medieval Roman Catholic Church. As starting point for our discussion allow me to read to you a paragraph from Preserved Smith's *Age of the Reformation*: it indicates the spacious nature of the great days about which we are to think. Here it is:—

In those days masses of men began to read many books, multiplied by the new art of printing. In those days immortal artists shot the world through with a matchless radiance of color and meaning. In those days Vasco da Gama and Columbus and Magellan opened the watery ways to new lands beyond the seven seas. In those days Copernicus established the momentous truth that the earth was but a tiny planet spinning around a vastly greater sun. In those days was in large part accomplished the economic shift from medieval guild to modern production by capital and wages. In those days wealth was piled up in the coffers of the merchants, and a new power was given to the life of the individual, of the nation, and of the third estate. In those days the monarchy of the Roman Church was broken, and large portions of her dominions seceded to form new organizations, governed by other powers and animated by a different spirit.

H. H. Yes. The Protestant break with Rome was, it seems to me, part of a great awakening of the spirit of mankind, and is not to be understood apart from the circumstances which accompanied it, by which it was affected, and upon which it in turn acted.

D. 1. I think there is danger of laying too much stress on those other events which were taking place at or about the same time as the Reformation. It is true that there was an increase of knowledge, and so on; but much of that was evil in its results. The Renaissance added to men's knowledge, but it did

¹ I was invited to take the Chair. It was a discussion group of four students. One belonged to the Latin Church, I refer to him as R. C. One was an honours student in history, I have called him H. H. The two remaining were students of Divinity, one in his first year and one in his third; they are designated D. 1 and D. 3. The Chairman is C. M. This use of symbols will save a certain amount of writing and be easy to follow.

There follows then the "dialogue" which ensued between R. C., H. H., D. 1 and D. 3, with C. M. presiding.

not increase their piety: rather the opposite. The discoveries of Copernicus and Columbus, whilst important in their own way, had little to do with the discovery which Luther made: that salvation is by faith alone. No, I think that to understand the significance of the Reformation we should concentrate on the immediate situation which called it forth. The medieval Roman Church was corrupt: that was the inevitable result of her departure from true Scriptural foundations. Through the machinations of able but unscrupulous popes, the greatest of whom was Innocent III, Rome had become immensely powerful, but not for good. There was no end of scandal, and there were all kinds of abuses. Immorality was common among the clergy; bishops derived revenue by permitting concubinage; Indulgences were sold conveying pardon for sins past, present, and future; and the only conditions attached were ability and willingness to pay. The Roman Catholic Church, which had by a series of frauds and forged decretals usurped the place and authority of the Holy Scriptures, could not possibly have had any other outcome. Corruption grew so bad, and so obvious, that the Protestant break became inevitable. And then God raised up Luther and Calvin and other good men and true, who were His instruments to bring men back again to the Bible and to turn the Church back to the primitive purity and simplicity of the New Testament. The matter does not seem so very complicated to me.

H. H. I cannot believe that the matter is so simply explained as you suggest. If the corruption of the Church was the explanation of the rise of the Reformers, then why did they not arise before? Such corruptions were no new thing: they had been there for centuries, and surely called for reform as loudly in earlier ages as they did in the sixteenth century. And it is to be remembered that the scandals which beset the Church in the Middle Ages did not seem nearly so outrageous to the people of those times as they do to us now. The Church had her serious lapses in morals and the behaviour of her clergy: but that was not characteristic of the Church alone but of the whole habits of thought and accepted usages of the times. You do not condemn the Protestant Churches although there are some men serving as ministers who fall short of the ideals of their calling in rather glaring ways occasionally. And this common and sweeping accusation of widespread and common dishonesty and immorality obscures the fact that there were good priests in the

medieval Church. Remember Chaucer's lines; they show that he was acquainted with honest and worthy priests:—

A good man was ther of religioun
 That was a povre persone of a toun . . .
 That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche,
 His parishens devoutly wolde teche . . .
 A better preest, I trowe that nowhere none is
 He waited after no pompe ne reverence,
 Ne maked him no spiced conscience,
 But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
 He taught, but first he followed it himselve.

D. 1. Yes, Chaucer may have known a good priest or two; there are good priests in the Roman Church to-day. But maybe Chaucer was not judging very strictly by Scriptural standards; and anyway the exception only proves the rule. By and large the Roman Catholic Church was, and is, an organization interested mainly in political power: which deceives the people with its vain pretensions; is utterly unscrupulous in its methods; and is wholly mistaken in its aims. Look at the state of Roman Catholic lands to-day and you will see just how much evil this system works. What good has it ever accomplished?

R. C. You are certainly severe in your judgment of the Catholic Church; and most unjust. That the Church has fallen short of the ideal of Christian practice, instructed Catholics do not deny. Read a book like Lord Acton's *Lectures on History* and you will realize that we fully understand that there has been, at times, a sad declension of morals and manners. We do not deny that there were many deplorable abuses in the medieval Church: but we also know that the Church ever strives faithfully to rectify such conditions. Remember that the true Reformation of the Church was not the Protestant schism, but the Reformation within the Church itself. Not Luther but Loyola was the really significant figure of those days. And as for your suggestion that the Catholic Church has never accomplished anything good, it is too absurd to need refutation. Nevertheless I shall quote a paragraph from one of your Protestant historians. I rather anticipated some such crude suggestion as you have made and therefore copied this from one of your leading Protestant Church historians. Concerning the medieval Church, Latourette has this to say:—

If it can be put in a paragraph, in what direction or directions did Christianity modify civilization? It tended to eradicate rival religions. It worked toward the adoption of its own cult and of its own ethics. It made for monogamy, care of the underprivileged, and

greater mercy, humility, and control of the passions (except when, as frequently, it contributed to stirring up war). It fostered certain types of mysticism. It provided channels for the transmission of the literature, philosophy, law, and science of Greece and Rome. It stimulated creative activity in the realms of intellect, of art, of music and of literature. By insisting that man's existence on this planet is a decisive prelude to a future of unimaginable length and that God, through the redemption wrought in Christ, has made possible for those who accept that redemption an eternal fellowship with Him, it gave a meaning and direction to human life, and a dignity which the latter had never before known. Much which Christianity presented ran counter to current ideals and emotions. It brought a sharp conflict, especially in Western Europe—a conflict which has not yet been resolved. Never did it fully have its way. Yet again and again it was making changes and its influence was spreading and deepening. Whether these contributions were good or bad, helpful or harmful, is another question. About the fact of the contributions there can be, in general, no reasonable doubt.

Surely there can be no question but that the changes indicated in that statement were, like the work of creation, very good.

D. 1. That may be; but I still maintain that the balance is and was on the side of evil. The most important thing of all was obscured; that was that man's salvation is by faith in the work of Christ—the finished work. The Church introduced a whole apparatus of priests, sacrifices of the Mass, mediation of saints and of the Virgin, Confession and Penance, and placed herself between the soul and God. When Protestantism broke with Rome it gave back to man the right to approach the Mercy Seat without any earthly intermediaries.

D. 3. Yes, but at the same time I think we must acknowledge much within the Church of the Middle Ages which was admirable, as well as much which was to be deplored. It can hardly be said that the idea of the approach of the soul immediately to God was ever entirely lost. It is true that in the minds of most the mechanical processes of the Sacraments, of Confession and of Absolution, and so on, did seem to be the machinery through the working of which salvation was achieved. But there were others in the Medieval Church too. There were mystics who practised the presence of God, and of the depth and reality of whose religious experience there can be no doubt.

H. H. Yes, and the interesting thing to me is that here we find a whole line of the Christian development which really owed more to Greek philosophers than to Jesus Christ.

D. 1. What do you mean?

H. H. Plotinus was the source of the Church's mysticism: the Platonic philosophy in Plotinus became mystical religion or religious mysticism. And the greatest of the Fathers of the Church was converted as much through the study of Plotinus as through that of the Bible. Augustine himself admits that the beginning of his conversion was through reading the books of the Platonists. The Flight of the Alone to the Alone, the Vision of God, with the fruits of purification, illumination, and enduement for service, stems from the pagan philosopher. And so when Luther rediscovered the genius of Augustinianism and the mystical element in religion, he was finding something which cannot be called a simple return to the plain teaching of the New Testament.

D. 3. There is truth in what you say, of course. The mystical side of the Christian faith has been strengthened and informed by streams which flowed from Hellenistic philosophy through Augustine and Luther into the Church. But there are two things to be said. One is that there were mystics in the Church before Luther's ringing emphasis on salvation by faith alone. One of the greatest is appreciated in Protestant circles to-day: that is Thomas à Kempis. You will find his *Imitation of Christ* for sale in the book-rooms of Keswick Conventions for the "Deepening of the Spiritual Life"! Now men like Thomas à Kempis surely understood that religion is not an affair of mechanical observance and outward ritual: surely they were possessed of that direct intuition of God which is the essence of mysticism. Surely, in other words, it was not necessary to wait for Luther's break with Rome for Christians to be able to know that the soul may have access to the Almighty, however much Luther did do to give that fact its proper emphasis.

D. 1. I have read Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation*. It shows a deep devotion to Christ, it is true, but there are grave defects in its presentation of Christian truth as well. There is little of the joy of salvation in it: it is written in a plaintive minor key. And it makes the false assumption that the religious man is a monk. And this whole matter of what you call mystical religion is open to grave suspicion. What you call mysticism is something which obscures the need for positive convictions and definite beliefs concerning God, and the duties which God requires of man. It is altogether too vague, emotional, subjective.

D. 3. Perhaps truth has more sides to it than can be stated in neat propositions. Perhaps the mystics are feeling after that which Paul calls the love of God which passeth knowledge. And the fact that men have always been found within the Church, and without it, who have so believed and so lived shows that even the medieval Church was not completely strangled by priest and ritual. And there is this to be said also. The mystical element of the Christian religion is not something which has been brought into it from the outside: it has always been there. It is not absent from the Old Testament: the most striking example of it in the Hebrew Scriptures is in the sixth chapter of Isaiah. There we have all the familiar outlines of the mystical experience: there is the Vision of God, the humbling of the devotee, the cleansing of conscience, and the enduement for service. Paul was a great mystic. It is not necessary to quote from his letters to support this statement. From the time of the Vision of Christ on the Damascus road Paul lived and moved and consciously had his being "in Christ". Therefore when Augustine found Plotinus he did not remain satisfied with that. He went on from Plotinus to Paul. It can be argued, and convincingly, that on its religious side the Reformation was the rediscovery of the Pauline emphasis and the reliving of the Pauline faith. Fully to understand the mystics of the Middle Ages one must know Augustine. And to understand Augustine it is not enough to know Plotinus and Plato, though that is important; it is indispensable that we understand Paul. That goes to show that Luther was not altogether a bolt from the blue. He was deeply influenced by the mystics and therefore the child of the Church which had made the religion of the mystics possible.

D. 1. I prefer to think that Luther was a bolt from the blue. He reacted violently to the Church from which he had come; and he has been responsible more than any other man for the weakening of its power. I still say that Luther and Calvin brought men back to the simplicity of the New Testament.

C. M. I would like to interject some remarks, particularly on the question of faith and mysticism. I will keep them however until I attempt to sum up later on. Meanwhile we have not heard from our Maynooth friend for some time now. What would you say of the Reformers and the return to the simplicity of the New Testament?

R. C. What Calvin and Luther did was to substitute a book for the Church. And that is the greatest weakness of the

Protestant position. You deny one infallibility and you assert another. But the Church is your only guarantee that the Book is infallible. Can the fallible guarantee the infallible? You urge that the Word of God comes only in and through the Scriptures. We agree that the Scriptures contain the Word of God; but the Church has been the sole guardian of that deposit of faith. The Bible is part of the tradition of the Church. By that authority can Luther, or any other, pick and choose and decide to keep one part of the tradition while rejecting another?

D. 1. Simply in this way. We both agree that the Bible is the Word of God. Then we also find that the Roman Church has much in her teaching and practice which is not only not found in the Bible, but is actually contrary to Biblical teaching. Protestants, on the other hand, build upon the Bible and upon the Bible alone.

H. H. Do not forget that Luther and Calvin took most of their teaching from the Church against which they led the revolt. They added nothing to the teaching of the Roman Church. They retained the Creeds, the doctrines of the Trinity and of the Two Natures of Christ, belief in the Fall, and in Original Sin as expounded in Augustine, and so on. That was all retained when they left the Church of Rome.

D. 1. Well, even if we admit that the Roman Catholic Church had certain of the truths of Christianity, it was so much the more at fault for not proclaiming them. And Protestantism retained these truths, not because Rome recognized them, but because they were in the Bible.

H. H. Can you find the doctrine of Original Sin in the Bible? Does the Scripture teach that we are guilty for the sin of our mythical first parents, apart from any misdemeanour of our own?

D. 3. It was not to be expected that the Reformers would set up something entirely new. That would not have been possible, nor desirable. Luther was slow to break with Rome. The break came not with the pinning of his Theses to the church door but with the burning of the Papal Bull. His original hope was to reform the Church by ridding it of the accretions which obscured the teaching of the New Testament, as Luther had come to understand them. That led on to an open break, of course, and this break does one very important thing. It brings into the light of day the principle of *Reformation*—a principle

which is always valid and imperative for the Church. As Luther said, "there is no authority in the Church but for Reformation."

H. H. Yes, but the Reformers soon forgot that principle: and we are not very willing to recognize it to-day. The Reformation very soon hardened into another orthodoxy. Soon the Reformers were as intolerant of change as the Romanists were, and are.

D. 1. Naturally they opposed change once the truth had been affirmed. But you cannot accuse them of such intolerance as Rome has always shown. Think of the thousands whom she has handed over to the civil authority to be burned at the stake. Protestantism has never been guilty of such wholesale slaughter as that. The Reformation signified the principle of religious toleration.

D. 3. Yes and No. The Reformers did not, as a matter of fact, plead for religious toleration. They do make strong pleas for toleration of the true faith, that is to say their own faith. But this was far from being a plea for religious toleration in general. Freedom of worship, except for themselves, meant little to those who broke away from Rome. Calvin did not hesitate to have Servetus burned publicly, precisely as Rome had heretics burned who differed from her.

D. 1. You are making too much of the single case of Servetus. The Romanists burned thousands.

D. 3. That is true. But the important point to note just here is that the principle involved in the burning of Servetus was precisely that involved in Rome's heresy-hunting. Calvin differed from Rome on certain doctrines and claimed that, as his view was the true one, Rome was wrong to persecute him. Servetus differed from Calvin on certain doctrines, but Calvin was not prepared to extend to Servetus the toleration which he believed Rome should extend to him. To Calvin's way of thinking there were certain doctrines, among them that of the Trinity, and it was permissible, or even imperative, to put any to death who denied them. The Reformers were intolerant. But in spite of that fact, the break from Rome brought the principle of religious liberty to light in the long run. Calvin did not realize all the implications of his own actions.

H. H. Are we not forgetting many other sides of the movements of those days? We are emphasizing the religious

schism which was due to Luther. But, after all, it is questionable whether that was much more than a squabble between monkish orders concerning the proceeds from the sale of Indulgences. Anyway the break in religion was the result of natural causes. What was it that Comte taught? That history divides itself into three great ages; that of religion, that of metaphysics, and that of science. There is much truth in that generalization, and in the sixteenth century religion was losing its hold on the minds of men and its grip on the imaginations. Even on the threshold of the approaching scientific age it was becoming difficult to assent to the preposterous claims of the Church. Authority had been wrong about the earth and the sun and the new world; well then, Authority might be wrong about other things. So were the seeds of scepticism sown in men's minds. The discovery of printing and the multiplication of books made it difficult for the Roman Church to prevent men reading things which it was not convenient for the Pope to have them know. The Renaissance had awakened men's minds and they were searching again amongst the wisdoms of antiquity. It was inevitable that there should have been a defection from the Roman Church amongst the more acute and intelligent minds; such could not be satisfied indefinitely on the tales of tawdry miracles and the enthusiasms of misguided fanatics.

R.C. Are you not choosing the worst elements which were to be found within the Church and by them judging the whole? You are forgetting the great and imposing structure of medieval philosophy which finds its crown in the works of Thomas Aquinas. There you will find the faith of the Christian Church set forth in terms of the noblest and most adequate philosophy which the mind of man has produced. Reason here comes into her own and theology is exhibited as indeed the queen of the sciences.

D. 3. Yes, but if it was right for St. Thomas to take the Aristotelian philosophy and employ its categories to expound Christian truth, surely it is no less right for the Reformers, or for men of our own day, to employ the categories of the highest thinking which they can find, to do the same thing. If Reason has the supreme place which you Thomists claim for it, it must have achieved something in the two thousand years or more which have passed since Aristotle wrote. The Protestant break with Rome implies the right to restate the faith in current forms of thought.

D. 1. That is Modernism! Along that line you will not find any secure ground from which to battle with the legions of Rome. But to go back to Aristotle: is not the whole trouble with medieval theology the fact that it is all Aristotle and no Christ? Luther compared his age to that of the Maccabees, the universities being but schools of the Greek fashion and heathenish manners. Rightly Luther said that "the blind teacher Aristotle rules even further than Christ". I cannot claim to be a student of Aquinas, but if the selections given by Father D'Arcy in his little book in *Everyman's Library* are a fair index, then Aristotle did rule almost to the exclusion of Christ. From that point of view the significance of the Protestant break with Rome was that it pointed to a return to the revelation in the Bible freed from the web of Aristotelian speculation which had been woven around it.

R. C. Yes, Luther did say that. But you cannot be bound by every word of Luther. You would agree that the man who advised Philip of Hesse to live a life of sin by being a bigamist on the sly, was far from being an infallibly safe guide. You are very ready, at any rate, to urge that argument against the popes. But Luther did not condemn Aristotle wholesale as you are doing; he admitted that there were things of value in Aristotle's writings; he excepted the books of Logic, Rhetoric and Poetic from his censure.

D. 1. That is to say, he excepted those works which deal chiefly with form and method, but he rightly rejected those with a positive content of teaching. Luther saw that, as he said, this dead heathen had conquered and hindered, and almost suppressed, the books of the living God; God had sent him as a plague for our sins.

D. 3. Yes, the Reformation contained a protest against the place which the teachings of Aristotle had assumed in determining the doctrines of the Church. But it should be remembered that the Middle Ages and their thinkers did not simply plagiarize the Peripatetic system. The medieval philosophers did, it is true, adopt many of the doctrines of Aristotle quite openly: but the Aristotelianism of the scholastics was more than a mere sterile imitation of the Philosopher. Aristotle was also the patron of the anti-scholastic system which had its vogue in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Platonism enjoyed an admiration which was no less enthusiastic than that of which Aristotle was the object. Augustine summed up and passed

on a goodly portion of the treasures of the ancient world, and the scholastics absorbed much of that. It is, therefore, not quite accurate to say that Luther simply broke away from Aristotle and swung back again to Christ. Further, the Reformers kept much of the Greek manner of thought: they took a great deal from the Roman Church which the Roman Church had taken from Greek philosophy. They continued to express the doctrine of the Two Natures in the One Person of Christ, for example, by the categories of the philosophy of substance. Again, Luther did not break away from Aristotelian and scholastic philosophy of substance and accidents in his doctrine of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; he substituted Consubstantiation for Transubstantiation, but that is a change within the area of "substantial" thinking. Nevertheless Luther did strive to correct what had been a totally mistaken emphasis. While he may not have completely carried out the implications of his ideas, nor entirely thrown off the incubus of Aristotelian thought, he did bring men back to the Scriptures, to the picture of Christ contained in the Scriptures seen as the perfect and unique revelation of God to man. Luther focused doctrinal thought on Christology.

H. H. We are back again at the religious side of this movement. But that was only one phase of something far greater, and maybe not the most important. Think of the economic changes which were taking place in the sixteenth century: those alone would render inevitable the upheaval in the Church. Those were the days of change from natural economy, the economy of exchange of goods and services for other goods and services, to a money economy. There was a great increase in wealth, which led to the rise of the bourgeoisie. Cannon blasted the castles of the nobles and enabled the newly rich to take control of life. And then there was the growth of the spirit of nationalism: and there was a new consciousness of individualism. Any single one of these meant more, probably, than the inner religious struggle of an obscure monk.

D. I. You mentioned the growth of nationalism. Will you enlarge a little upon that, please?

H. H. Nationalism? Well, it was inevitable that with the crystalization of national units the idea of national churches should emerge: and this resulted in partial disintegration of the Roman Church. In the Middle Ages the idea of nationalism, as we understand it to-day, was almost unknown. But by the

time of the Reformation the nations were becoming recognizably distinct entities. Racial differences were becoming clearly defined. The medieval idea was that there was one Empire and one Church, the temporal and spiritual sides of Christendom. It was impossible for the idea of a national church to emerge until the idea of the nation had taken shape. But once nations became self-conscious, it was inevitable that there should be a breaking of the Church Universal into national groups. By the end of the fifteenth century, absolute monarchies had become the centres of all leading nations of Europe, except Italy and Germany.

D. 1. The exceptions which you mention shows up the weakness of your argument. Luther was a German and therefore a member of one of the least, and not of one of the more nationally conscious groups.

H. H. That may be granted. The unification of Germany was long delayed. But even in the eleventh century Germans were beginning to feel that Germany was a nation. This feeling was strengthened by the possession of a common language which was distinct from the Latin tongues. There was a growing feeling, too, that German nationalism was being encroached upon by the Italian Church: the Germans felt that the Church had ceased to be the Church Universal and had become the Church of the Pope and his henchmen. And the Germans resented the defection of funds to Italy for the support of the Papacy. This alone would have brought about a religious revolution; Luther gave powerful expression to this feeling. Further, the spread of the new learning to the North emphasized the difference between the Germans and the Italians, and roused the Germans to emulation. They would show that things German were as good as, or better than, things Italian.

D. 3. What you say is true. Luther's works indicate that the causes of the Protestant revolution included the growth of German national feeling. But it included other elements too: such as the loss of prestige on the part of the Papacy, and, most important of all, the fact that German religious needs were not being met. Remember Luther's words: "Let us therefore hold it for certain and firmly established, that the soul can do without everything except the Word of God, without which none at all of all its wants are provided for." That is just what the Germans were not being given, the Word of God. Humanism played its part but it cannot explain the Reformation; the humanists

were unconscious of the great movements of which they were the representatives. Economic life and development played its part but neither can it explain the Reformation. The growth of nationalism played its part, but none of these taken separately, nor all of them taken together, can finally explain the Reformation. There is the further fact of the need of the human soul for God. This was symbolized by Luther more strikingly than by any other Reformer, and that is why the inner religious history of Protestantism's break with Rome can best be studied in the story of his religious experience and the growth of his religious convictions.

R. C. Mr. Chairman, we are travelling much too fast. You are assuming, all of you, that with the growth of nationalism, the changes in economic life, and the humanism of the Renaissance, there came about a disintegration of the Church Catholic by which it was broken up into national churches. But most emphatically this was what did *not* happen. There was a secession from the Church Catholic; but the Catholic Church remained the Church. The Catholic Church is still the Church of All Nations. It is in Protestantism that we find such self-contradictory conceptions as "The Church of England", or the "Church of Scotland", or the "Protestant Episcopal Church of America", or the "United Church of Canada". So the schismatics split and again split until by process of division and sub-division Protestantism has produced the monstrous brood of warring sects, each claiming to possess the truth more fully than the rest. That which is born of schism is destroyed by schism. Doctrinal differences very soon appeared amongst the very leaders of the revolt against the Church. To mention just one such, Calvinists, Lutherans, and Zwinglians disagreed on the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Eucharist. Zwingli will have it that the elements are mere memorials of Christ's Passion; Luther believes in a substantial presence beneath the accidents of bread and wine, Calvin teaches a kind of dynamic action of God which he calls being spiritually present. The significance of the Protestant break with the medieval Church lay simply in this, that God was visiting His people, there was an upsurge of renewed spiritual life, and the devil, if you Protestants will allow me to speak about such a being, not being able to hold some people back, did the next most effective thing: he pushed them too far. And so the schismatics hived off. But the true Church continued and within her borders the true

Reformation took place. The expression "Counter-Reformation" is misleading: it suggests something positive in the so-called Reformation, which was opposed negatively by a movement within the Church, into which the Church was more or less shamed. No doubt the break made it clear to many that reform was urgent: but the stream of new life which grew into the Reform movement had its springs deeper. No mere effort to counteract Protestant heresy could have led to that movement which brought it about that

half of Europe was secured for the Roman Catholic Church, and Protestantism was put on its proper level, as consisting of two sects, Protestant and Reformed, in separation from each other and from the Catholic Church. The gains of the Counter-Reformation seemed all on the side of the Roman Catholic Church; for, besides reconquest and extension of territory which went steadily onwards from that date, she recovered the practice of true religion.

That quotation, allowing for certain inaccuracies in terminology, states the facts very fairly.

D. 1. I cannot agree with that; I believe that the facts show that the Jesuits and their founder were inspired by a fanatical determination to save what they could from the wreckage created in Rome by the Protestant Reform. To do that they would use every means in their power to defend Romanism and to injure Protestantism. And while it may be true that we Protestants are divided into many camps, nevertheless it may be that we possess more real spiritual unity than exists within your Church for all its outward uniformity. If you do not permit much quarrelling amongst your various factions about differences of opinion or of doctrine, there is much rivalry, carried on with bitterness and jealousy, which is a far greater denial of the spirit of Christ. And the uniformity which you do possess, and which you parade so arrogantly before the world, is built on the denial of basic human rights; it is built on the denial of man's right to form his own opinion. You teach men to believe that it is not for them to reason why, but blindly to obey the command of their spiritual superiors. Granted that Protestantism may in some ways have gone to regrettable extremes, nevertheless our break with the medieval Church signified the assertion of the great principle that every individual is entitled to live his life, think his thoughts, and seek his God.

R. C. And by their fruits ye shall know them. The principle of the rights of the individual, as misunderstood by Protes-

tantism, has led to the anarchy of to-day. It has produced the philosophy of "every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost". Hence must be traced our present chaos, religious, political, economic, and Protestantism's dissipation into a vaguely pious scepticism.

D. 1. That might be true if all that the Reformation did was to stress the importance of the individual as an individual and nothing more. But there was more to it than that: what was brought out when Protestantism broke away from the thralldom of Rome was the place and dignity of the individual soul before God. That implied that a man has the right to worship God in freedom and according to his conscience. This was implicit in Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. This liberty was far removed from licence: it made man free lord of all and subject to none: but it also made him the most dutiful servant of all and subject to everyone.

H. H. Well, I wonder if it has been worth it? I copied this passage from Fisher's *History of Europe*, and I think that it is rather appropriate:

A Chinaman of the period, had he been in a position to survey the turbulent European scene during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, might well have asked himself whether the art of living was not better understood by a people which had no religious quarrels because they had no religion but only an ethical code of deportment, whether the vast liberation of human forces brought about by the Protestant Reformation with all its infinite consequences for art and music, science and letters, was worth the price of long and savage wars, and whether an attitude of mind towards the ultimate mysteries less aspiring, less heroic and less confident than that which prevailed among western Christians was not in effect more conducive to human comfort.

R. C. I would agree with your Chinese that the Protestant schism was a great mistake, but not because it interfered with human comfort.

D. 1. And I think the fruits of the Protestant break from Rome were infinitely well worth all the discomfort which attended them.

D. 3. There is one important point upon which we have not touched. That is the question of the relation of Church and State. The Protestant break with Rome marked the beginning of a new conception of their respective spheres. The medieval Church claimed to be superior in dignity and authority to the temporal power, and Innocent III made vassals of kings. This

was one of the points upon which Luther strongly argued against the Roman position. Luther urged that the state had autonomous rights; that it is an order ordained of God and is therefore to be obeyed by the Christian man. Calvin and Calvinists qualified this attitude to the extent of saying that obedience must be given so long as the command of the state is not contrary to the command of God. The Lutherans have always shown a strong tendency to submit to the State and this fact rendered the Nazi expansion of power in Germany so much the easier. The tension between Church and State has reached a new height in our day; and the trends leading up to this were set in motion with Luther. What the solution for our day will be remains to be worked out. In Germany and Japan the question was brought out into the open; but the tendency everywhere is for the State to take over ever wider areas of man's life and thought. The Reformation is significant not so much as offering a solution of the problem as for confronting us with the problem in modern dress.

R. C. I can see no ultimate solution to that problem save a return to the medieval conception; that unfortunately is not likely to happen in a world which has been so led astray by Protestantism.

C. M. The time has come when we must bring our discussion to a close. Several points have been raised upon which I would like to enlarge at length. But there is only time to refer to one or two of them and that very briefly.

Assumptions have been made about mysticism and Christianity about which I am not happy, particularly with reference to the Old Testament and the call of Isaiah, for example. Then there is the big question of the attitude of the Reformers to the Scriptures which needs to be cleared up more than we have done. Again one of you equated Modernism with restatement of Christian doctrine in modern language. That needs some qualification before we can allow it to pass. But there is one problem far more important than anything which we have discussed to-day. It is often overlooked, but it underlies most other problems connected with the Reformation. That is the significance of the Reformation for our understanding of the whole question of Revelation and Natural Theology. The Roman Church makes a very big place for Natural Theology. So do the Churches of Protestant orthodox tradition. But did not the Reformers in their appeal to the testimony of the Holy

Spirit, and Luther, particularly, in his revulsion against the Philosopher, point to the truth that our knowledge of God is utterly dependent upon God's revelation of Himself? That is the question which I want to see thoroughly discussed and enlarged upon. Beginning with the affirmation that the Word became flesh, and taking the doctrine of the Incarnation with radical seriousness, what light is thrown upon this whole question of Reformation yesterday and to-day? That, it seems to me, is the urgent theological task which we should set before ourselves now. What do you think?

D. 1. I doubt if we know enough to say more than we have already said. But I propose that, if it is agreeable to the others, the Chairman be asked to prepare a paper on the theological issue which he has mentioned. Do you all agree?

All agreed.

C. M. Thank you. I shall endeavour to do as you suggest. You see I think that our need to-day is not to return to the Reformation, but to press on from the Reformation. Reformation is always the Church's imperative necessity. I shall try to set us thinking along these lines by preparing a paper on the theme: *Revelation and Reformation*.

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