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# "NOTHING BETWEEN."

"THE SPECIAL DOCTRINES VINDICATED AT THE REFORMATION AS  
BEARING UPON THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE CHURCH."

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## A PAPER

READ AT THE FIRST CONFERENCE  
OF THE  
CRAVEN EVANGELICAL UNION HELD IN LEEDS  
UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF THE VERY REV. THE DEAN OF RIPON,

MARCH 22nd, 1881,

BY THE

**REV. EDWARD HOARE, M.A.,**

**Vicar of Holy Trinity, Tonbridge Wells, and Hon. Canon  
of Canterbury.**

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

## THE SPECIAL DOCTRINES OF THE REFORMATION AS BEARING UPON THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

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It is a glorious subject that your Committee has entrusted to my care, and I consider it no small privilege to have been led by your invitation to study it. At the same time it is not without its almost overwhelming difficulty, for our conflict with Rome extends along the whole line of truth, so that almost the whole of Christianity is included in the special doctrines of the Reformation. The struggle is between Christianity paganized, and Christianity pure; and the real conflict lies between the whole system of the one, and the whole system of the other. It reminds me of a conversation between a Protestant clergyman and a Romish priest. The clergyman, in order to illustrate the spirit in which Christian brethren should hide each other's faults, told a story of an artist who, in painting the Emperor of Russia, put the finger to the face in the attitude of

thoughtfulness, and so concealed an unsightly blemish, on which the Romish priest said, "And why do you not do the same towards us?" To which his friend replied, "We would if we could; but we cannot; for in your case it is blot all over." So the taint is all over the teaching of Rome.

Yet there is one class of subjects in which our conflict with Rome is more especially prominent, viz., that which concerns the application of the great salvation to the individual. That salvation may be compared to a chain reaching down from heaven. Respecting the higher links, such as the nature of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, the divinity of the Son, the humanity and the purpose of his death, there is no direct collision between us; but when we come down to the last link of all, the application of the whole work to the sinner, it is then that the real battle rages. The great struggle of the Reformation was a struggle between the divine application and the human; between the simple principle of gift as revealed by God himself, and the man-made system of merit as constructed by the Church of Rome.

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To illustrate this point let us study four particulars, which may be likened to the four corner stones of our citadel, and consider them in the order in which they stand in our Articles; the sufficiency of the Scriptures; justification by faith; the spirituality of the sacraments; and the final completeness of the one propitiation.

### (1.)—*The Sufficiency of the Scriptures.*

It is the fashion to say that the Articles were intended as a compromise; but that nothing can be further from the fact may, I believe, be proved without the slightest difficulty. The Council of Trent met in the year A.D. 1546, and then drew up some of its most stringent dogmatical decrees. It was in direct opposition to these decrees that the Articles were framed six years afterwards, as containing the clear, well-considered, and uncompromising testimony of the Church of England. This may be proved even by their omissions, for there are some things which we might wish to find in them, but which have been passed over in silence, for the simple reason that respecting them there was no collision with Rome. Such, *e.g.*, is the inspiration of the Scriptures. If we were called to draw up the Article now, the subject of inspiration would be the first to be considered. But no error had been taught by Rome respecting it, and therefore it did not appear on the battlefield, and was not mentioned in the Article. The Article referred only to the new position defined by Rome in the Council of Trent, and that new position involved the insufficiency of the Scriptures. Rome taught two errors, first, that there are two parallel lines of truth, "written Scripture and unwritten tradition," and declared that both must be received "with equal sense of piety and reverence"; and second, Rome placed the Church as an interpreter between the Scriptures and the individual, and decreed that no one should "dare to interpret the Scriptures except according as the holy Mother Church has held, and still holds, and also according to the unanimous consent of the fathers, even though their interpretations should never at any time have been brought to light." It was in direct opposition to this decree that the Sixth Article on the Sufficiency of the Scriptures was drawn up six years afterwards. It declared Scripture to be sufficiently full and sufficiently clear: sufficiently full, for it contains all things necessary to salvation without any supplement from tradition; and sufficiently clear, for, without the aid of either Church authority or the unanimous consent of the fathers, it speaks right home to the heart and understanding, so that whatever "is not read therein, or may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an Article of the faith."

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### (2.)—*Justification by Faith Alone.*

"How should man be justified with God?" has always been the first grand question for an awakened conscience. Thus those who know what it is to be justified through faith, will not be surprised at Luther's memorable statement that the doctrine of justification by faith is the test of a standing or falling church, for we all know that in the case of individuals it is the turning point between a life of fear and a life of peace; may I not add between even death and life itself? Now on this point we are in direct collision with Rome. The conflict turns upon a single word. How can it be of such overwhelming importance, some will say, if all turns upon a word? But one word may make all the difference between truth and error, between peace and anxiety. There was a time when the whole controversy respecting the divinity of our Blessed Saviour turned on a letter, the little letter *ι* in the word ὁμοιουσία, which made all the difference between oneness and resemblance. The turning point in this controversy is the one word "only." In 1546 Rome decreed "if any man shall say that men are justified by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ *only*, or the remission of our sins *only*, and not by grace and charity, which is infused in their hearts by the Holy Scriptures, and is inherent in them, let him be anathema." That anathema the Church of England boldly challenged when in A.D. 1552 she drew up her Articles; and with distinct reforms to the "*only*" of Rome's decree, she said exactly that on which Rome had pronounced her anathema, "we are accounted righteous before God *only* for the merit of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ," and that "we are justified by faith *only*, is a most wholesome doctrine." Such an Article does not look like a compromise. It was the direct and open acceptance of Rome's challenge. "If any man says *only*, let him be anathema," says Rome. We say it, says the Church of England, for we know it to be the truth of God, and, knowing that, we defy your curse.

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### (3.)—*The Spirituality of the Sacraments.*

I am often surprised that staunch Protestants appear sometimes to speak with a certain measure of distrust of the Church Catechism, for there are few documents which contain clearer, or more decisive, statements as to great Protestant principles. What, *e.g.*, can be clearer than the definition given of a sacrament, "An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace"? That definition teaches two truths—(1) That the grace is inward and spiritual, and (2) That the sign is distinct from it, being outward and visible. In that short sentence is contained one of the great principles of the reformation. Rome had confused the sign with the grace when it decreed that the whole substance of the elements was changed into the whole substance of the body and blood of Christ, in which case it is obvious the sign must cease to be a sign, being changed into the thing signified. The Church of England taught, Article 28, that such "transubstantiation was repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, and overthroweth the nature of a sacrament." Rome had decreed, "If any one shall say that in the Eucharist Christ is received *only* spiritually (observe the *only*), let him be anathema." The Church of England replied, "The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the supper *only* after an heavenly and spiritual manner." Rome said, "If any one shall say that faith *alone* is a sufficient preparation for receiving the Lord's Supper, let him be anathema." The Church of England replied, "The mean," *i.e.*, the only mean "whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper, is faith." Pages of other passages might be quoted had I time, but these are enough to show the real point at issue. Rome taught that the sign was transubstantiated into the thing signified, and so ceased to be a sign as it became a living Saviour, localised on the altar with body, soul, and even bones and nerves. The Church of England taught that the risen Lord is "in heaven and not here," that the sign remains a material, visible sign, and that the grace is a spiritual grace. So that, as is well said in the homily, "The meat we seek for in this supper is spiritual food; and nourishment of our soul, a heavenly refectation, and not earthly; an invisible meat and not carnal." And again, "Look up with faith upon the body and blood of thy God, thou marvel with reverence, thou touch it with the mind, then receive it with the hand of thine heart, and thou take it fully with thy inward man."

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#### (4.)—*The Final Completeness of the one Propitiation.*

We hear a great deal in modern times of the mass. The Church of England calls the holy sacrament "the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion." But some faithless sons of hers call it "the mass," and some amiable men are so enamoured of visible unity that they actually memorialize the Archbishop for a recognized toleration of all the paraphernalia of what the Reformers used to call "massing priests." Now let us clearly understand what is the real point of the controversy respecting the mass. It is associated in people's minds with the Eastward position, and with candles, with incense, with chasubles and tunics, with thurifers, acolytes, and priests, &c., &c., &c. But it was not for such things as these that our martyrs died. They are all bad enough, but in themselves they were not worth dying for. They died for a truth, and the great truth for which they died was the complete, final, everlasting sufficiency of the one Divine Sacrifice for sin. It was this that put the Church of Rome and the Church of England into direct and irreconcilable antagonism. It was not till the year A.D. 1562 that Rome drew up her decrees on this subject, so that in this instance England was first. Our Reformers were well acquainted with all that was being taught by Rome, and so drew up the noble and uncompromising words of article xxxi. in the year A.D. 1552:—"The offering of Christ *once* made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that *alone*. Wherefore the sacrifices of masses, in the which, it was commonly said, that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits." Well spoken words were those, burning words from glowing hearts. Those men knew the value of a finished, complete, all-sufficient, and final propitiation by the Son of God, and their trumpets gave no uncertain sound as they swept to the winds the man-made fiction of a propitiatory sacrifice in the mass. And it was in direct opposition to these noble words that Rome decreed, "If any man shall say that the sacrifice of the mass is not propitiatory, and ought not to be offered for the living and the dead, for sins, punishments, satisfaction, and other necessities, let him be anathema;" (Sep. xxii.-3), and thereby taught that there was a necessity for some further propitiatory sacrifice; and that the remission of sin is not granted, as England had declared it was, through the one complete, final, and all-sufficient propitiation and that alone; but that for the remission of sins and punishments there is required a continuation of sacrifice in the mass.

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It would be a very easy thing to shew how all the other fictions of Rome must melt away if these four great truths are established in the heart. Let them be known in their power, and all the rest, mariolatry, saint worship, purgatory, priestly absolution as a means of forgiveness of sin, and all the complicated network of superstition will disappear of themselves; but for that I have no time now, for I must hasten to that which seems to be the great object of the Committee in the selection of the subject, the practical bearing of these blessed truths on the spiritual life of all classes in the Church. What, then, is that practical bearing of these great and most important principles? Is it possible to gather them together, as it were, into one focus and to sum up the result in one simple proposition? I believe it is, and that the practical result of the whole matter is this, that on these distinctive principles we are brought face to face with God himself, and that there is nothing intermediate between God and the sinner, so that the whole result may be summed up in two very simple words. "Nothing between."

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Observe for a few moments how this result follows from every one of the four points.

Are we earnestly desiring truth? and do we long to know the revelation of God respecting the way

of life? We are not called to search for it in that vast bundle of hay, the unanimous consent of the fathers, or to apply to a priest to convey to us an authoritative interpretation even of passages which the Church has never interpreted, but we are taught to go straight to the fountain-head of truth at it wells up from God himself, and as He has given it in His own inspired Word. We are not dependent on what man tells us of God's revelation, but we go direct to the revelation itself. We do not rely on any intermediate authority who may discolour the truth as a painted window discolours the sunbeam, but we look straight at the truth itself in all its brilliant purity, and, though sometimes we may be dazzled by its brilliancy, we rejoice in the fact that there is *nothing between*.

Are we anxious on the subject of our acceptance with God? and asking the question, How can a man be justified with God? We are again brought face to face with Himself. We are not called to look *outside* for any sacerdotal act to introduce us to God, or even *inside* for any work of the Holy Spirit in our own hearts to recommend us to His mercy. But without strength, without godliness, sinners, and even enemies, we are permitted in His boundless mercy to receive the reconciliation, to throw ourselves, with *nothing between*, into the arms of Him who has redeemed us, and as we are, and just as we are, trust Him at once for a full, complete, and all-sufficient justification before God.

Are we longing to live feeding on the Lord Jesus Christ, and nourished by that which in the sixth chapter of St. John he sometime describes as the bread of life, and sometimes as his body and blood? Again we are taught that for that sacred food and sustenance we must be brought into direct and immediate contact with himself. We are not to look for any mystical change in the elements supposed to be accomplished by some miraculous power in a priest, or suppose that it is Christ in the elements that is the real food of the soul when hungering and thirsting after life. But we are taught that it is the soul *itself* that feeds on Christ *himself*, and so enjoys his promise, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst."

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And lastly, does the soul tremble under the consciousness of sin? Sin of the nature? Sin of the heart? Sin of the thought? Sin of the act? Sin of the whole man and every part of him? Does the horrid, dreadful thought of sin rise up as an impassable barrier between the conscience-stricken sinner and the holiness of God? Once more the great principle of a complete and final propitiation proclaims without reserve the joyful tidings that in Christ Jesus there is *nothing between*, that the veil of the temple is rent from the top to the bottom, and that now there stands open a new and living way leading direct to the mercy seat of God. To remove that awful barrier of unforgiven sin, we need no saints, no masses, no purgatorial fire. We need no priests to make a propitiatory offering by what he claims as his sacerdotal power. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we have received the reconciliation from the Son of God himself. It is his own blood that was shed, and his own hand that has given the pardon. And, though Satan may accuse, and conscience convict, though it may seem impossible to our own judgment that such as we are should ever be permitted to find fellowship with God, we may thank him with profound thanksgiving that he has removed the curse by bearing it himself upon the cross, and may venture to draw near in the words of that most incomparable hymn—

Just as I am, thy love unknown  
Has broken every barrier down,  
Now to be thine, and thine alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come.

Whatever, then, we take as our starting point, we are brought to the same conclusion. NOTHING BETWEEN. From whichever point of the compass we begin, whether from the Scriptures, or justification, or the spirituality of the sacrament, or the full and finished Atonement, in every case we are led to the same conclusion. Everything intermediate between the Soul and the Saviour is swept away for ever, and with nothing between—nothing to hide the truth while claiming to make it plain, or to hinder the approach while pretending to help it—we are brought face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ himself; and being pardoned through his perfect propitiation, and accepted in his perfect righteousness, we can say as St. John did, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

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\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK "NOTHING BETWEEN" \*\*\*

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