

THE PALMERSTON CONTROVERSY

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S TEACHING
EXPLAINED

The first part of the following letter from the Rev. Father J. Lynch appeared in the *Palmerston and Wai-kouaiti Times* of June 13, and the conclusion in the issue of June 20:—

'Sir,—in his last letter Rev. Mr. Clarke demands that I quote the words of another Pope "modifying the doctrine of Pius IV." By so doing, he tells me, I "shall do something to remove the stigma; but nothing else can." I think I have satisfied the Rev. Mr. Clarke's demand. In my reply to his letter I cited an authoritative pronouncement of Pius IX., bearing directly on the axiom in discussion. Herein that Pontiff gives the meaning which the teaching Church and the unanimous voice of Catholic theologians have ever given this axiom. (1) "*It is to be held as certain that those laboring under invincible ignorance of the true religion are not in this matter blameworthy in the sight of God.*" (Allocution of December 9, 1854.) (2) Here is a still more emphatic and explicit declaration by the same Pope in regard to the Church's teaching on the salvation of non-Catholics: "It is known to you and to us that those who are in invincible ignorance of our most holy religion, who while observing the natural law engraved by God in the hearts of all, ready to obey God, lead a good and upright life, (those) *can through the working of the power of divine light and grace attain to eternal salvation.*" (Encyclical Letter of August 10, 1863.) These words of the Pope "modify" the axiom: "Out of the Church there is no salvation." How? Not by "toning down," as Rev. Mr. Clarke would suggest, but by putting the meaning of the axiom in its proper light. The Pope and all Catholic theologians teach that *there are two ways of belonging to the Catholic Church: (1) Catholics, as such, belong to what is called the Body of the Church—that is, are within her external, visible fold. (2) All non-Catholics, who are invincibly ignorant that the Catholic Church is the one and only true Church of Christ, but who nevertheless lead good and holy lives—in other words, who are in the state of grace—belong to the Soul of the Catholic Church and are within her invisible fold.* This axiom, therefore, requires no "modifying" in the sense of "toning down" what Rev. Mr. Clarke was pleased to call "cruel and merciless" doctrine. All that is required is to explain, as Pius IX. does, that the Catholic Church requires that men belong to her visible or invisible fold.

The Catholic Church teaches that a thing may be necessary for salvation in two ways: (a) Because Christ made it an *indispensable means* of salvation; (b) because *Christ commanded men to do it* for the obtaining of salvation. When a thing is necessary as a *means* of salvation no man may either blamelessly or through his own fault omit that *means* and yet attain to eternal salvation. When, on the other hand, a thing is necessary for salvation *by reason of a command of Christ*, then, in certain circumstances, a man may be excused from performing that command. How? (1) Because (through no fault of his) he has never heard of this command of Christ, or having heard it, misunderstands. (2) He may have heard of the command of Christ, understood it rightly, and is willing to perform Christ's command, but physically or morally is unable to do so. Apply this to the teaching of the Catholic Church. She declares that Christ set up one and *only one* Church upon earth. To that Church Christ said: "He that heareth you heareth Me. He that heareth shall not be condemned." This axiom, "Out of the Church there is no salvation," is based upon the bedrock dogma of the Catholic faith—i.e., that the Church of Christ is *one*. Our Divine Lord spoke not of *My Churches*, but of *My Church*. Every figure He applied to her clearly set forth this *oneness*: the sheep-fold, the net cast into the sea, etc. There cannot therefore be, as we find in England to-day, 274 "religious denominations" or true Churches of

Christ. (See *Whitaker's Almanack* for 1895.) Can there, Rev. Mr. Clarke? If there can, you make our Lord responsible for *all their contradictions!* For almost 1600 years the Catholic Church in the West remained in undisputed possession of the title, "the one true Church of Christ." Then, however, as Butler says:

"Religion spawn'd a various rout
Of petulant, capricious sects,
The maggots, of corrupted texts."

Yet, despite these noisy sects, the Catholic Church is by the law of prescription still in possession. The vast, vast majority of Christians acknowledge her title deeds as genuine, and render her obedience. Intellectual men outside her visible fold admire her wonderful unity, her unrivalled organisation, her admirable system of theology and Canon Law. She nevertheless is not puffed up with pride or filled with the spirit of self-righteous, hypocritical self-complacency. She towers above other religions, but she does not despise the honest beliefs and convictions of those who do not acknowledge her claims. She is ever merciful and charitable, and therefore does not sing:

"O, God-like isolation which art mine,
I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening Drovers of Swine
That range on yonder plain."

Does the Catholic Church hold and teach *that it is necessary as a means to salvation* that every man, woman, and child in this world belongs to her *Body* or visible fold? Most emphatically not. What, then? That it is necessary as a *means to salvation* that all men belong to her *soul*—i.e., her invisible fold. What conditions are necessary that any non-Catholic may be within the soul of the Catholic Church? That such a one be in the state of sanctifying grace—nothing more. How is this state of grace acquired by a non-Catholic who has sinned grievously? By an act of perfect contrition, which always implies an act of perfect love of God and the will to do all things whatsoever God requires of us. This desire to do God's will in all things implicitly includes the desire or will to belong to Christ's Church—i.e., they would be Catholics if they knew that our Lord commanded them to enter the Catholic Church, and there was given them an opportunity of doing so. This is what the Catholic Church means when she says that no one can be saved who is outside of her. She requires in all non-Catholics *the one condition* that they die within her invisible membership. *This demand simply amounts to this, that they die in God's grace and friendship.* For over three months Rev. Mr. Clarke has been in labor trying to bring forth a monstrosity—namely, that the Catholic Church damns and denounces all non-Catholics. But the terrorising sight of the words of his own Presbyterian Confession of Faith has made him *faire un accouchement avant terme*. No doubt this is why he begs to be left alone! Someone may ask: How can the Catholic Church admit that a man, who speaks all manner of evil against her, who calls her in the words of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith "the Synagogue of Satan," belongs to her *Soul*, is her invisible member, and if he is ever to be saved must be saved by being within her invisible fold? It is explained by the law of Christian charity. The Catholic Church believes that he does so through invincible ignorance of her truth and her claims, and therefore she forgives him and prays for him. Is not this what St. Paul said of the Jews: that through blind ignorance they crucified the Lord of Glory, and that they would not have done so had they known what they were doing? Is not this but the following of the example of Christ, Who prayed for His executioners: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do"? But, says Rev. Mr. Clarke, "the words of the axiom" mean what they say. Yes, but they don't mean what you say. It makes all the difference in the world to bear in mind who are they who belong in one way or another to the Church, and who, *positis ponendis*, will be saved through her. There is a saying of St. Paul: "Every-

Better Teeth

At HOWEY WALKER'S,

Less Pain.

QUEEN STREET, AUCKLAND,
Less Expense.