

don its peculiarities. Each will have a fair opportunity of stating through its representatives, its position on the various questions. The meetings will be of the same tenor as those of the Evangelic Alliance, only on a vastly larger scale.

It is not strange that the various protestant bodies should embrace the opportunity with enthusiasm, for it is the very nature of Protestantism to court investigation and discussion. It is apparently more strange that the Catholics should be in favor of meeting their adversaries in such a congress. Exceptions have been taken by some ardent followers of that faith to the whole plan on the supposition that "there will be no harmony of thought" and that "truth" will suffer by the "juxta-position of error." To which Archbishop Ireland in his dedicatory speech with admirable clearness of perception answers:

"There is no force in the remark. The vital primordial truths regarding the supreme God will be confessed by all. The proclamation of these truths will be a great gain. Beyond this those who believe they possess the truth need not fear. Truth should not be timid. Rather should she court publicity on this as on all other occasions, in order that she be known and loved. There shall be no discussions, no controversies. The purpose shall be to show forth in methods of peace what are the professions of faith and the religious works of the world at the present time. From the plans of the department of religion of the congress auxiliary nought but good results can follow."

It may be presumed that the prelate in speaking of "truth" refers particularly to the doctrines of the Roman church; that his aim is to allay the fears of those who are concerned about the victory of Romanism. In other words, the Archbishop holds, that his church need not fear an open proclamation of her doctrines. Romanism is able to hold its own in the midst of an exhibition of the world's religions.

This may be startling to those who possibly think that the Roman Catholic theology is only a net of absurdities and superstitions. But these are wrong and the Archbishop is right. His church today is the strongest of the churches of the world, not only numerically but also in other respects.

The exponents of Romanism count in their ranks some of the leading intellects of the age, and they have a system of theology which for apparent consistency, profundity and logical connection of the various links is unexcelled. In brief, the theology of Rome is as perfect as mere human wisdom, guided by the experience of centuries, can make it. And it is at all times open to improvement. Rome claims apparently with much force to have divine authority, derived through an unbroken chain of succession from the first Apostles of our Lord. Rome has a cult which, with its gorgeously attired clergy, imposing ceremonies of alleged worship, its magnificently ornamented sacred buildings and its splendid musical exercises appeals to the outward senses of its devotees, more than any other Christian religion. Rome takes in everything, makes use of everything for her own purposes. Through her benevolent institutions, the poor are reached. The wealthy are appealed to through the luxuries of the services. The philosopher is given some of the profoundest problems to solve in her theology. The civilized state is influenced by her subtle statesmen, and the

savage tribes, by her missionaries. All *pro Deo et eccles*

In almost every one of these particulars, the Protestants are found wanting. As far as their theology goes, it is defective, even in its logic. The different parts do not fit, a fact which is best illustrated by the existence of broadly speaking—countless factions. Protestantism is really nothing but Romanism, broken to pieces, scattered, resolved into a chaotic condition, by the mighty forces which, at the time of the reformation, convulsed the northern parts of Europe. It is the result of a mighty social eruption, more destructive than creative, although necessary for the completion of the history of the world and the development of truth. Should it therefore come to a comparison—were Protestantism and Catholicism placed side by side, it would become apparent to any intelligent observer, that the former resembles the latter about just as much as Charleston after the earthquake resembled itself before the catastrophe.

This is perhaps more clearly visible in the ritual and the ordinances of Protestant denominations than in the doctrinal systems. What a striking similarity there is in the divine services, the formulated prayers, the confessions of faith, the administration of the sacraments, the uniforms of the clergy, and a dozen other things. And yet, how absolutely poor do the Protestants look compared to Rome. In some churches there is absolutely nothing to satisfy the æsthetic taste of the cultivated mind. Eloquence is an exception in many dusty pulpits, or what is worse, they are occupied by political demagogues. Music is represented by a discordant volume of sound competing with roaring organ-pipes, unless, as in some churches, there is no attempt at music at all. Sculpture is banished as suggestive of idolatry, and painting is scanty, if tolerated at all. The whole make-up is suggestive of the eagerness with which somebody tore things down without ability to build up. A comparison cannot fail to reveal this.

But where Protestantism is weakest, is in its utter disregard of divine authority. The position of the seceders from Rome in this regard is utterly absurd. Luther, himself, used to feel keenly, that he had undertaken a work for which he had no direct divine authority. But he consoled himself with the thought, that he had been regularly appointed to his ecclesiastical office by the church of Rome, which had the right to appoint. He tried to argue that this authority once conferred upon him could not be taken away, and that he, consequently, always had it. But at other times, he saw that the same church that had conferred the priesthood on him had the right to take it, and that this had actually been done, when he was dis-fellowshipped. At such times he used to argue that Rome, being a fallen church, had no authority to confer and no authority to take away; but that what he performed was done by authority of the books of the Bible. And this idea was adopted by Protestants as the safer one. And they claim to this day to have their sole authority in the Bible.

Here is where the absurdity becomes most glaring. The sacred volume records at least two different dispensations. Both claim equal importance; both are the works of God. But they

have different scopes, different ordinances, different commandments.

Men who claim nothing but the Bible as their source of authority have these alternatives: They must either reject one dispensation and accept the other as the pattern of their faith and practices, or they must accept parts of both and reject parts of both, where the discrepancies are irreconcilable. This latter alternative has been chosen by the Protestants. They accept parts of the Old Testament and parts of the New, all the time trying to make people believe that they accept it all. Hence the miserable patch-work of religion known as Protestantism and hence the endless contentions among themselves, because no two bodies of "Christians," and, indeed, no two prominent individual theologians can agree between themselves about which patches to use and which to discard.

Romanism is not guilty of this absurdity. It believes in the Bible, but it believes also that theology like every science is progressive; that new facts can be discovered and old ones, better understood. It pretends to believe in the presence of the Divine Spirit who guides into all truth and requires its followers to accept as truth what the so-called infallible representative of the Almighty declares to be the truth. This ends the controversy. What the head of the church declares to be the doctrine of the church is accepted as such, whether it is found in so many words in the Bible, or only in tradition, or in the records of the ecumenical councils. This is authoritative and saves the church from a glaringly absurd position.

In a contest with Protestantism Rome must therefore become victorious. It was not the intrinsic value of the reformation, that saved it from destruction in northern Europe. It was the victorious arms of the Swedish hero who gave his life for it at Lutzen. But for that, Germany would undoubtedly have shared the fate of France and Spain. It was, and still is, a contest between two equally false systems. Romanism is as radically wrong as Protestantism, but the former falsehood has the greater appearance of truth, to a casual observer at least; it has the more elegant surface. It is therefore more attractive to the multitude, and Archbishop Ireland can without fear state that "truth," as he sees it, has nothing to fear from a juxtaposition to "error."

From the oriental churches Romanism has much less to fear. As Protestantism is nothing but Romanism crushed to fragments, so the oriental churches are the Roman church in her various stages of infantile development. Rome progressed so fast in the early centuries on the path that led her astray, that all her branches could not follow. They dropped off, one after another and each remains to this day very much as it was at the time of secession. They are powerless in a contest of this nature. In fact, the desire is growing in the orient for a reunion with the mother church.

Judaism is a religion of the past. Its mission in the history of the world will soon be accomplished. It is impotent in a contest of religions.

The only power to which not only Romanism but all other systems of religion must eventually give way is the power of God as manifested in His true Church. No doubt, the day is