V. Bishop Strossmayer to Mr. Gladstone, February 10, 1877, Djakovo. (In German.)

Above all pardon me for answering so late. Partly a prolonged indisposition, partly endless work which accumulates before Lent, prevented me. Believe me, each of your letters is a new consolation to me and a further ground for deeply revering and loving you.

Many thanks for the lucid exposition of the situation of your country towards the Eastern Question. To be honest: I have not been at all satisfied by the conferences in Constantinople. They were too temporizing and not decided enough, in view of the wily and malicious subterfuges of Turkey. It seems to me that the result of the conferences is not such as to fill the world with great respect for the wisdom and firmness of European diplomacy. The most essential fault of this conference seems to me to have been the latent disunion of the Powers, which the wily Orientals contrived to exploit to the full. There are unhappily in Europe white Turks, who in their dislike for the Slav Christians, emulate the "black" Turks. I do not know whether I take the right view, but it seems to me that more agreement prevailed between the English and Russian ambassadors than could have been hoped. This is mainly your doing, my dear friend. At any rate, it seems to me most desirable that agreement, and if possible intimacy, should be restored between England and Russia, respecting the aims to be reached in Turkey. You are a thousand times right; nothing can be made of the Turkish element. Only the grant of autonomy to the Turkish provinces and a Christian Government, however incomplete at first, can produce seed leading to the rebirth of the Turkish territories. We have here been immensely pleased by the idea recently developed by you, that Turkey, by refusing to accept the unanimous resolutions of Europe, has forfeited the advantages secured to her by the Paris Convention.* Cessante ratione, cessat rationatum. Turkey was only included in the European Concert, on condition that it would enforce in its own house those principles of state upon which humanity and culture largely rest.* If it remains savage and barbarous, and behaves contumently and repulsively towards the
public opinion of Europe, then it is unworthy of European protection and good-will. Europe would be forgetful of her higher mission and would deserve the divine chastisement, if in this case she did not use absolute force, to quench for ever the inflammable material which threatens a general conflagration.

Only one more point in this direction. When a few months ago I told my kind English guests something of the unheard of cruelties committed by the Turks in Bosnia, and when what I said found its echo in the papers, the English and Austrian Consuls in Sarajevo saw fit virtually to call me to question for this.* The Austrian Consul-General, who is a Slav, I answered in Slav. Now according to our papers the English Red Book has published a greatly watered down extract of my letter. I now venture to give you a correct extract, so that you, and if necessary the English public also, may know exactly what I have written. I wrote to the Austrian Consul, that I had learned of those cruelties from many absolutely reliable witnesses, especially from my priests, who have parishes on the banks of the Save and were eyewitnesses of such cruelties. I then added the remark: "The representatives of foreign powers always serve a certain tendency, and among us it is believed that they do not always possess the capacity of preserving towards their chiefs that independence which is necessary in order to reveal events in their true light. Besides, it is not a question whether this or that event took place in this or that form, but mainly whether it is possible that Christians should remain under the rule of the Koran and its fanatical followers free from tyranny and every kind of cruelty. Every thinking man must answer this question with a decided 'No.' The Koran orders in God's name that the Christian dogs should be exterminated by the sword; where this is quite impossible, it condemns them, once more in God's name, to shameful servitude, and excludes them for ever from every right and power and property. The whole history of the Christians among the Turks is written in three dreadful words: stupid arrogance and laziness; shameless and often unnatural lust, and finally the horrible cruelty and tyranny which go with it.* All that Europe has done hitherto to improve the lot of the Christians, has not merely remained ineffective but has made it worse, because the Turks, and rightly from their standpoint, are angry at their Christians giving cause for Europe to interfere in their internal affairs, to disturb them in their enjoyment and to seek impiously to impose on them her own will instead of the divine and unalterable law. I cited, for example, the little town of Brod, which lies on the banks of the Save in our immediate neighbourhood, where the poor rayah in the presence of our authorities hurled thousands of reproaches in the face of the Turks who urged them to return, regarding incredible cruelties such as the murder of innocent children and old men, and the most infamous violation of girls, boys and women, as was related to me by a reliable and learned witness. I added; if to these cruelties of a single place and a single occasion be added the whole extensive Turkish empire and four whole centuries, then every Christian heart will be convinced that the bitter cup of suffering of the poor Christians in
Turkey is already overfull and that we are justified in at last expecting from the justice and wisdom of Europe that it should take pity on them and hasten to their aid, the more so as their own interest demands this, in order that the inflammable material in Turkey may not produce an universal European conflagration." This is the true sense of my letter, which I send you with the request that if your "Red Book" shall have given a false extract, you will be kind enough to correct it.

Unhappily, I do not speak English, but I shall be most grateful if you send me something for my library. I have a niece, my sister's daughter, seventeen years old, who knows English well. I am also anxious that my young clergy should learn English for the sake of its rich and splendid literature.

The final remark in your letter has made you still dearer to me and still more worthy of respect. It is the privilege of great minds to deal with those religious questions which touch the whole world's deepest interests. Christianity is the innermost principle of human life. Only the grace of Him Who died for us all and by His death opened for us the unquenchable sources of higher life, can renew mankind and fit it for the attainment not only of its immortal but also of its earthly destiny. The question of "credo" or "non credo" is for every nation a question of life and death. You are right, my friend, the relations of belief and grace to reason and science, to liberty and the whole complex of earthly life are the most important questions, at once fearful and fruitful. Such questions very often form the subject of my thought, but my weak health and the burdens of my practical calling leave me little leisure for it. If God some day grants that I should see you, and prove to you my respect and admiration, then we will exchange our views on this subject in all love and openness. The human mind can achieve much in such questions. But just as the last word of the secret of the Union of Divine and human nature in one Divine Person will only be clear to us when we are ripe to look upon God, so also the whole secret of those holy and tender relations which subsist between Faith and Reason and Science, between Grace and Freedom and the moral value of practical life, will only be clear to us when we have thrown off our earthly shell and have attained to a higher outlook. Faith stands clearly and firmly enough before our spiritual vision, to bend our reason beneath the yoke of divine Truth; but so long as we wander in this life, there will always be some dark places in Faith, that with our zeal in the recognition of divine truth and with the humility of the heart the merit of our faith may increase. For some time my mind has specially busied itself with that Unity of Faith and of the Church,

which is at once the most precious fruit of our redemption and its final aim. I have indeed chosen this as the subject of this year's pastoral address to my clergy. It seems to me that mankind, despite its errors and numerous frailties, is tending towards this unity. God formerly converted the great Roman Empire into a preface and a true introduction to Christianity; to-day I think that God wishes to make those wonderful instruments of communication and traffic between the most distant parts of our globe, which steam and electricity offer, into a preface and introduction to that ideal unity which Our Lord made
the subject of His noblest prayer to His Eternal Father before His death (St. John xvii.). How gladly I shall some day discuss these lofty subjects with you, if God will! It is true that for this to be done successfully, Bossuet would have to arise in the Bishop, just as the famous Leibnitz has arisen in my dear and valued friend. Forgive my verbosity. Ex abundantia cordis os loquitur. In deep respect and esteem, I embrace you and am proud to call you my friend.

STROSSMAYER,
Bishop

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