

credible, that out of His supereminent bounty He has gratuitously lifted us up to the supernatural order revealed in Christian religion. By this new creation He has but extended the profusion of the goodness which He manifested in our first making, and accomplished that conformity and that tendency to Him which He implanted in the nature of our soul.

---

### THE DUTY OF CATHOLICS IN THE FACE OF MODERN UNBELIEF.

**I**T has been remarked by ecclesiastical historians, that no heresy has ever flourished for more than three hundred years. If one and another among the various forms of error has continued to exist beyond this period, its life has been but a living death. The principle of corruption inherent in it from the first became so manifest to all except those whose eyes were blinded by their personal interest in it, that men passed it by as having outlived its time. It was out of harmony with the spirit of its age. It was not only certainly doomed to die, but the process of decay was visibly proceeding. It was like the man who still lingers on, although mortification has long ago eaten away the diseased limb, and is advancing surely and slowly towards some vital part. After its tercentenary of vigor (if falsehood can ever deserve the name of vigorous), every heresy is doomed to linger on rather than to live, to drag on an inglorious existence without influence, without strength, without any hold on men of cultivated intelligence and ability, save in so far as it panders to pride and passion, and affords a convenient excuse for a life of self-indulgent pleasure-seeking, or sordid money-getting, or selfish ambition. If its term of life has been extended, it is because of the respectable shelter it affords to those who shrink from obedience to a church which enforces upon her children, in practice as well as in theory, the necessity of self-denial and submission to authority. If it still numbers among its members some pious souls, who, in all good faith, accept its teaching, it is because prejudice and education have blinded their eyes, or because they have no opportunity of knowing a better creed. But they are a class existing rather in the past than in the present, or at least they are to be found only in dark nooks and crannies, where the light of God's truth shines but dimly.

To this law of the decay of heresy, Protestantism appeared some thirty or forty years ago to afford a signal exception. It had existed 300 years and more; it had flourished nigh 300 years, if we may date the period of prosperity from the day when the Spanish Armada was wrecked on England's shores, and Elizabeth felt herself secure on a throne which had refused submission to the Holy See. The early storms, half political and half religious, which sent the Pilgrim Fathers to New England's shores, instead of shattering the bark of Protestantism, appeared to establish on either side of the Atlantic a form of religion congenial to the temper of the northern nations, and therefore possessed of a vigorous vitality. The early promise for a long time seemed to be fulfilled. Protestant religion, whether Episcopalian or Presbyterian, was either the established or the dominant religion in England, Scotland and Wales. America, as she grew up to be a powerful and independent nation, followed in the track of the old country. If Ireland clings to her hereditary faith, those who had usurped her soil, and driven her inhabitants from the homes of their ancestors, regarded the crushing out of the Catholic religion as merely a matter of time. If the Irish presumed to be obstinate in their Popery, they could be swept from the country altogether, and could be replaced by Protestant settlers, who would renew the face of the earth, and fill it with an enlightened Protestantism. Everywhere among the English-speaking nations this new form of Christianity rooted and fixed itself, and boldly proclaimed itself the religion of the future, uniting the advantages of Christianity and independence of thought, of piety and freedom, of a willing acceptance of Divine revelation without a submission to any living authority, which could impose inconvenient dogmas.

Even as late as a quarter of a century ago, Protestantism seemed to have fulfilled her early promise. True, there had been internal divisions and defalcations from the religion of the government or of the majority. Episcopalianism has been sorely wounded by children whom she had herself nursed and reared, but if they ceased to be Episcopalians they still remained dogmatic Protestants. Among Episcopalians themselves, a wide separation had arisen between the Evangelical school on the one hand and the Puseyite or Ritualistic on the other hand, but the latter like the former were still essentially dogmatic Protestants, even though they played with the name of Catholic. Firm and strong to all appearance, the Protestant temple still stood; the Protestant Churches were crowded with worshipers; the Protestant religion was regarded as the champion of orthodoxy against the Rationalist, and one Protestant minister's anathema was still regarded with appren-

sion, as excluding, if not from the pale of salvation, yet at least from the pale of social and religious respectability.

But how great the change! So great that we who have drifted into it do not appreciate its full significance. The disintegration of Protestantism has been going on with an almost inconceivable rapidity during the last few years, and is proceeding at an ever accelerated ratio. In England it is rapid enough, but the proverbial conservatism of the English character has retarded the process. The political importance of Anglicanism has given to the Episcopalianism of England a factitious strength. The Anglican bishops, members of the House of Peers and Lords spiritual, highly educated and wealthy noblemen, whose well-bred dignity entitled them to a place in the best society, communicated a sort of magnificence to the religious body to which they belonged. The Anglican clergy, drawn from the upper middle class, many of them from the ranks of the landed gentry, were social potentates on a small scale in town and village, and gathered round them all the respectability of its inhabitants. Even now there are many small towns and country districts where absence from the English parish church is considered as almost a slur on any man above the class of laborer or artisan, and the absentee is denounced in the family circle as little better than an infidel. But even in conservative England, these old-fashioned notions are rapidly giving way and are being relegated, like the *paganism* of the early middle ages, to remote districts and hamlets far removed from the busy hum of the crowded city.

In America, however, these influences are scarcely felt. The whole condition of society is completely different. The absence of an hereditary aristocracy, or a state religion, the fact that the influential class consists for the most part of men who have made their own position by their own personal energy and talent, robs Episcopalianism of that exclusive prestige which still clings to it in the educated classes of English society. Every religion in America has to fight its way on its own merits, and if it have weak points, they are sure to be detected and exposed. The quick instinct of public opinion discovers whether any given form of belief has a solid foundation to rest upon, and approves or condemns it accordingly. It is illogical and self-contradictory; the eager and acute intelligence of young America, without any formal process of reasoning, rejects it as an insoluble article. There are none of the time-honored associations clinging around it which in England blind men to its inherent weakness. It has not the traditional hold on the American that it has on the Englishman. The difference between the two countries is of course one of degree, not of kind; but no one who studies the state of feeling on either side of the

Atlantic can deny its existence in a very marked degree. Even in New England, the influence of "blue-blood" and of the form of religion with which the blue-blood for the most part identifies itself, is small as compared with its influence in the old country. In the Western States it scarcely exists at all. In New York and the surrounding cities it is declining day by day, and in a few years will be an element scarcely worth consideration among the forces which will determine the future religion of the country. In England, a Methodist or Wesleyan shopkeeper who makes money and is ambitious to be counted among the "gentry," still finds it desirable to adopt Episcopalianism as one of the factors which constitute respectability and aid the parvenu to a place in good society. But few Americans would think of turning Episcopalians merely for the sake of the social advantages accruing from it.

The result of all this is that dogmatic Protestantism, of which Episcopalianism is the representative creed, has a far worse chance in America than in England. The change which has taken place within the last thirty years is far more obvious in the former than in the latter country. The Episcopal and other Protestant churches find their adherents falling away from them more rapidly. Their congregations become beautifully less, their services are less frequented. The number of worshipers depends far more on the personal ability and attractiveness of the minister. It is far more necessary for him to consult the popular taste, and to serve up meats flavored and seasoned to suit the wishes of his listeners.

The existence and the popularity of men like these is a remarkable indication of the decay of Protestantism in the United States. It is one of many indications that dogmatic Protestantism is moribund, if not practically dead, as a religion. It has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. The hunger after some sort of religion may still attach the "pious female sex" to the formal belief which has been handed down to them; their husbands or brothers may still accompany them to the Episcopal Church of their parish.

In country districts and in fashionable watering-places, the churches may still be frequented for respectability's sake, but Protestantism as a living, energizing power, ready to do battle against all opponents, has lost its former vitality, and thoughtful men are drifting away from it into some form or other of unbelief or agnosticism. They gather in crowds to listen to the open opponent of Christianity, and applaud with insane delight his flippant sarcasms or unveiled attacks on all those doctrines which, to their parents and ancestors, were dear as their very life-blood. Respect for the religious opinions of the majority, which shuts the mouth or veils the unbelief of many an English skeptic, is not recognized in

America as a motive for silence, simply because the majority of Protestants have no religious opinions calling for respect. They no longer cherish the fundamental doctrines of Christianity with a personal and deeply rooted affection. If they still call themselves Christians, their Christianity hangs, for the most part, somewhat loosely about them. They do not feel hurt if it is assailed, or resent the covert sneers of the disciple of Strauss or Renan.

From time to time they wake up to a dim consciousness of the moral and social "ghouls" that are being let loose upon the world by the disciples of "free thought," but the danger is not sufficiently imminent to force them to enter seriously into the consequences of their religious position. They lament the frequency of divorce and the precocious independence of youth, the vices which ravage society and recall the corruptions of the pagan world; but they view the evil from a certain distance and console themselves with a hope that the spread of education or the growth of a healthy civilization will gradually crush out the evils, the existence of which it cannot fail to recognize.

It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that the encroaching and advancing tide of unbelief makes short work of the barriers by which dogmatic Protestantism seeks to hold it back. As the inrolling sea sweeps away the rampart and citadel of sand which the busy hands of little workmen erect on the sea-shore, so the inrolling sea of skepticism is rapidly washing away the bulwarks and forts of sand which all the various forms of Christianity, save one, oppose to its advance.

All save one—for one there is which the waves and waters of modern thought are powerless to injure. Feebly and fruitlessly they beat upon the solid masonry on which the Church of God is built, and idly they lash themselves into fury and expend their feeble force on the rock upon which she is built. Vainly do they sweep round her if perchance they may find one weak point in her defences, one little cranny in which they may force an entrance and rush in to their work of destruction. But as the ages roll along, instead of loosening her hold or undermining her foundations, they do but add fresh strength to her position and bind together her solid bulwarks into a more perfect unity and exhibit her more clearly to the whole world in the majesty of her eternal might. The Catholic Church rises up proudly among the seething waters, and amid the general ruin stands out in striking contrast to the feeble creeds which are being swallowed up in the abyss. The rain falls and the winds blow and the floods come and beat upon that house, and it falls not, for it is founded on a rock.

Even those who have for centuries attacked and reviled her are beginning, as their own frail tenements are beaten down by the

storm, to turn from time to time their wistful eyes to the indefectible glory of her unshaken faith. She, and she alone, is regarded by the enemies of Christendom as an adversary to be feared, and while they hate her, revile her, misrepresent her, yet all the while in their secret hearts they respect her and recognize her power. The innate faculty which grasps instinctively after Truth can never wholly be eradicated, and even the dogmatic Atheist amid his most audacious blasphemies still cherishes, deep down in the depths of his soul, a consciousness, or half consciousness, that after all the Catholic Church is right and he is wrong. The lurking suspicion may be buried under a heap of vice and pride and intellectual dishonesty; it may be overlaid with a mass of sophisms by which he has long sought to deceive others and has at last succeeded in deceiving only himself. But you may expel nature with the pitchfork of fallacy and plausible argumentation, yet back she will come in spite of all; and the skeptic, while he denounces all religions as mere empty and illogical superstitions worthy of the contempt of intellectual men, has from time to time a misgiving lest in his sweeping denunciation he should be condemning, amid a mass of criminals justly doomed to die, one that is the very Truth itself, and whose only crime is that she demands unqualified and unconditional submission from rebels who will not obey.

But while the Church has nothing to fear from her puny assailants, and looks down calmly from her vantage ground on the battle which rages around, her children, as individuals, do not share in her indefectibility. The waves which beat harmlessly on the rock of the Church may engulf, and do engulf, many of her sons and daughters. The advance of skepticism brings no danger to the Catholic Church, but it is pregnant with danger to Catholics. As the Evil One can avail nothing against God, but can work and does work sad havoc among the children of God, so unbelief, the Devil's first lieutenant, carries captive and entices to their destruction not a few who are the children of Catholic parents and perhaps have themselves been nursed in the Church's bosom. As the Devil consoles himself for the hopelessness of his warfare against God by venting his spite on those who bear the stamp of the Divine likeness, so he consoles himself for the hopelessness of his warfare against the Church by many a successful raid on those who are signed with the sign of the Catholic Church and enrolled in her army. Soldier in deed and in truth the Catholic must be in the present day, and many an assault he must encounter, many a battle he must fight against the countless foes who are arrayed in the livery of modern unbelief. In his daily paper, in his weekly or monthly magazine, among his associates in the school of medicine or of law, in office and counting house, in club and restaurant, on

the railroad, at the hotel, at the private dinner-table, in every social or friendly meeting, he is liable to encounter plausible, ingenious, well-stated objections to Christianity and even to Theism. There is no shirking the contest; the enemy must be met. If we would avoid coming into contact with modern infidelity, we must needs go out of the world. It is in the very air we breathe; it encircles us on every side; we may protect our children from it during childhood and early youth, but the day must come when they will be exposed to its attack. Every day it stalks abroad more fearlessly, emboldened by the overthrow of the dogmatic Protestant. How, then, are we to deal with it? What is the attitude of the Catholic, and especially of the educated Catholic, towards modern Infidelity?

The question is the more important because of the weight which the world outside attaches to the dictum of the Catholic on religious questions. Men seem to expect not only every priest, but every educated layman to be a trained theologian and controversialist. They appear to imagine that the gift of inerrancy attaches to every expression of opinion on the part of each individual Catholic. They expect us, one and all, to be armed *cap-a-pie*, to be ready to meet every objection and to solve every difficulty; or if not this, at least to be able to tell them what the Church teaches on this or that point of doctrine or practice. They are often quite unreasonable in their demands on our information, and on our power of ready argument. All this makes our responsibility the greater. Few Catholics are aware how great a treasure is committed to their charge; how the Protestant and the waverer between belief and unbelief expects of them an acquaintance with all the moot points of controversy, and accepts their statements on the most intricate questions as if they were the voice of the Church herself.

It must be acknowledged that the position of Catholics is a difficult one. As a general rule, our adversaries are better equipped than we are as regards general cultivation, the higher education, and in scientific knowledge. They have the advantage in point of mere secular learning and intellectual development, on both sides of the Atlantic. From a variety of different causes it must be confessed that in respect of dialectic skill, and literary research, and scholar-like training, and breadth of information, Protestants are the superiors of their Catholic neighbors. It would not be difficult, if our space allowed of it, to trace out the causes of this superiority. It will be enough at present to remind our readers that any nation, or section of a nation, which has for long years been driven out of the political and social arena by direct or indirect persecution, sinks thereby in the social and intellectual order, and only recovers, after the lapse of centuries, the advantages of which it has been un-

justly deprived. Add to this that the discouragement by the Catholic Church of mixed education deprives her loyal children of many opportunities of secular learning which they would otherwise have enjoyed. The former of these causes has been at work, ever since the Reformation, both in England and in Ireland. In the latter country it was carried on with a persistent brutality which, until but a short time since, made the higher education impossible, unless at the price of apostasy ; and though in England the persecuting laws fell into abeyance at an earlier period, yet the Catholics, long accustomed to the tradition of injustice, and excluded from the English universities, and from all the public educational endowments, held themselves aloof from the intellectual as well as from the political activity of the nation, and lived for the most part in the quiet retirement of a country life.

The savage cruelty with which Ireland was treated in matters of education did not affect the Catholic population of Ireland alone. Its effects are keenly felt in America at the present day. The forced illiteracy of generations has left the class to which most emigrants belong so unaccustomed to intellectual cultivation that they have almost ceased to feel the want of it. In spite of a bright, quick intelligence, in spite of an eagerness for knowledge, in spite of a natural docility and readiness to learn, they have been so long starved of their mental food by the hateful oppression of misrule, that they do not recover, even in the freedom of American liberty, the appetite for intellectual training which once made Ireland one of the most learned of European nations. Even in America, too, Catholics as such are at a disadvantage. The public schools, with their purely secular education, are no fit place for the training of Catholic children. The normal schools and universities share the same defect ; and though we cannot expect non-Catholics to understand the injustice thus entailed on Catholic consciences, yet as a matter of fact the Catholic population is at a very serious disadvantage as compared with their Protestant neighbors, and is heavily handicapped in the intellectual race.

All this renders the problem to be solved a more difficult one. Fought the battle must be. How are we to train our young soldiers to fight it? What reply are we to advise the Catholic to make when he is brought face to face with the Protestant, the opponent of Christianity, perhaps the open scoffer against the existence of God? Is he to be silent, or to attempt a reply, conscious as he often is of being at a disadvantage in a knowledge of facts, in skill of argument, in the use of the weapons with which he has to shield himself and to strike down his adversary? Is he to endanger his cause by his feeble method of fighting for it? Is he to expose his holy religion to a suspicion of weakness which is really his, not



Hers? If he attempt a reply, ought he simply to stand on the defensive, or is he to carry the war boldly into the enemy's country and attack the position of his adversaries? Is it best for him merely to state the Catholic doctrine without attempting to defend it, or ought he to be able to give a reason for each article of his faith?

The practical solution of questions like these depends not so much on the generation of Catholics now growing up into manhood and womanhood, as on those who have the charge of their intellectual training. It is the parish priest, the presidents of Catholic schools and colleges, the superiors of the training institutions, the Catholic schoolmaster and schoolmistress, be they religious or secular, whose attention we desire to direct to this all-important question. It is they who have to form the rising generation of Catholics. It is to them that we look for the arming of the champions of Faith against the insidious attacks of error. It is they who have the best opportunity of suggesting the weapons to be used, the method of fighting to be adopted; it is they who must put in the hands of the combatant the shield which is to defend him against the piercing darts of skepticism, and the sword and the spear with which he is to attack and put to flight the enemies of the Catholic Church.

The first point to which we would call attention is a point so obvious that it would be absurd to allude to it if it were not so generally overlooked. It is that all dangers to faith from whatever external source they come derive their power to harm from some moral weakness in him who is exposed to them. Mere external attack will never harm the faith of a Catholic, if he have been living up to his religion. The reason of his peril is that there is a traitor in the citadel. In small or great things there has been some unfaithfulness to the grace of God, some wilful, deliberate unfaithfulness, generally some open rebellion and violation of the moral law. The young man whose life is stainless, who has not allowed the siren pleasure to seduce him by her wiles, or the lust for gold to absorb his energies and shut out God, or the longing for fame and honor and a high reputation among men to turn him aside from his desire to please God, will be impervious to every attack on his faith. The objections raised by the skeptic may cause him pain as being an insult to the religion that he loves and cherishes. He may be quite unable to answer the difficulties raised, but they make no impression upon his intellect, and he instinctively rejects them, as a good son rejects any sort of imputation, however apparently plausible, upon the honor of his mother. It is only when there has been some practical disloyalty to God that faith is prone to be weakened and shaken by the attacks of non-Catholics and

infidels. The moral sense must be perverted before the intellect can admit a practical error subversive of its complete and perfect adherence to Truth.

If all Catholics would live good lives, Ingersoll's blasphemies would fall as harmless on their ears as the rattling shower of bullets on the casemate battery. *Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt.* The pure in heart shall see God, and seeing Him they shall see His truth with a clear vision, and seeing it there is no fear lest they desert their virgin mistress Truth for the foul harlot Error, however cunningly Error be painted to deceive the unwary, and however closely she may seek to imitate in garb and gesture her Godlike rival. Hence the man who trains up the young in the love of virtue does more for the defence of truth than he who hurls syllogisms against Error, and plies her with the most trenchant and convincing argument. He is a more efficacious champion of the truth even than one who furnishes youth with a thorough knowledge of their religion, and teaches them solid arguments in defence of every dogma.

It was only the other day that a young man, trained most carefully in a Catholic college, said mournfully to one who was remonstrating with him on his skepticism: "I know well all the arguments for my religion. I know the answers to all the ordinary objections brought against it. I find no difficulty in refuting the objections, *but yet somehow I myself do not believe.*" The gift of faith had been forfeited by habitual sin, and the armory well stocked with weapons was useless to him, who had lost the power to use them. There is no such thing as a purely intellectual difficulty against the Catholic faith. It is when the intellect is blinded by the corrupt will that conjures up the spectre of doubt that it attributes to the phantom a solid reality. It is the intellect debauched by concupiscence which loses that instinctive perception of truth which is an infallible preservative against error and doubt.

But while all this is of primary importance, while nothing without a high morality can ever be a safeguard against the loss of faith, we must not neglect the other side of the question. We must not be satisfied to see our youth grow up pious noodles so long as we are sure that they are pious. Even if it were safe policy as regards Catholics themselves (which it is not), it would bring Catholicity into contempt, and would be a fatal bar to the conversion of those who, though outside the Church, instinctively look to Catholics as the proper champions of truth. Even on matters of natural religion, unconnected with positive dogma, Catholics, and especially Catholic priests, are expected to come to the front, and so be ready with a philosophical defence of first principles. Hence arises the practical point at issue, how far should ordinary

Catholics be trained up to religious argument with the enemies of our religion, or with inquirers who raise conscientious difficulties against this or that dogma, or Catholic practice?

I think that the general experience goes to prove that religious controversy is rarely productive of much good. It may be sometimes necessary, but it is an unfortunate necessity. It rarely convinces; it still more rarely converts. It very commonly strengthens prejudice and embitters opposition to the Church. It has a constant tendency to desert the true question at issue, and to run off into some issue which is not really to the point. It assigns the victory for the most part not to the champion of truth, but to the possessor of the quickest wit and sharpest tongue. It is of more importance to the professional controversialist that his arguments should be plausible than that they should be true. In controversy clever clap-trap often carries the day. An appeal to the sympathies or feelings will enlist the hearer on the side of error in spite of the underlying fallacy. For these and other reasons like them it is, as a general rule, unwise for the ordinary Catholic to enter upon a religious controversy. It is far better for him to fall back upon the weight of authority; and any man of intelligence will understand that this is the most rational and sensible course for him to pursue. If a skeptic asks me (I speak in the character of an average educated Catholic layman) whether I really believe that my God is present in a wafer, when the evidence of every sense testifies to its being an ordinary piece of bread, and challenges me to prove the fact, my most rational answer is to ask him, by way of retort, whether he really believes that the earth moves and the sun stands still, when the evidence of his senses testifies to the contrary, and so challenge him to prove by arguments the scientific fact. He will, probably, reply that it has been proved again and again; and that, though he cannot bring forward the actual proof, yet he knows that they are sufficient to satisfy men of learning who are competent judges of the question. I answer that this is exactly my case with regard to the doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist. I cannot prove it, but I am satisfied to receive it on authority, just as he receives on authority the doctrine of the earth's revolution. The only difference is that he relies on human authority, and therefore makes an act of human faith. I rely only on Divine authority as well as human, and therefore make an act of Divine faith.

But, as a general rule, what is asked and expected of Catholics is not so much the arguments by which they try to prove this or that dogma, as a statement of what the Church actually teaches on this or that point. One of the greatest hindrances to the conversion of non-Catholics is a false idea of Catholic teaching; they

attribute to her some manifest absurdity, and then on the strength of its incredibility reject the Church's teaching as a whole. Granted their premiss, their conclusion is a perfectly logical one. If the Church inculcated upon her children a single dogma which wavered by a single hair's breadth from the rule of truth, the whole system of her teaching would be justly rejected by mankind. It is true that Tertullian says, *Credo quia absurdum*, but we must remember that Tertullian was a Montanist, and, even if he had not fallen away when he wrote those words, yet the tendency to exaggeration was a part of his nature. Besides, the words admit of a perfectly true meaning. *Credo quia absurdum* does not mean, I believe this on the score of its absurdity, but I am obliged to exercise faith on this point because it is at variance with ordinary experience. In this sense the dictum is perfectly true of the mystery of the Blessed Eucharist, of all miracles, of all the strange paradoxes which make the Gospel of Christ a scandal to the Jews, and to the Greeks a folly. But Catholics at the same time cling to that shield which is their safeguard against the skeptic and the world. They must never forget that there is only one religious system in the world which teaches no absurdity in the strict sense of the word, which involves no inherent contradiction, which asks the acceptance of nothing against which an enlightened reason revolts, and that is the Church which is founded on the See of Peter.

To return to our immediate subject, we are asking ourselves, what is the safest attitude for the average educated Catholic, when brought face to face with the infidel objector; and consequently what should be the general drift of the teaching given to our young Catholics, who are likely to have to encounter cultivated skepticism, and what should be the advice of those who educate them as to the position they should take up if called upon to defend their faith? As I have said, they cannot be armed, *cap-a-pie*, against all possible objections, and, even if they could, it certainly is a dangerous thing to enter upon a dispute with an opponent who is well-instructed, quick-witted, and perhaps rather unscrupulous. But men of the world do expect, and have a right to expect, that the Catholics should be able to state, clearly and simply, what it is that the Church teaches on those points where she is most often misrepresented, and where she is most obvious to plausible objection. The mind of man has an instinctive perception of truth, an innate appreciation of the fitness of things. This instinct, though it may be dulled by deliberate sin, and overlaid with ignorance and prejudice, never disappears altogether. Even in those who have learnt to call evil good, and good evil, it never can be wholly extinct; some faint vestiges of it remain even in the degraded intelligence of the dogmatic and proselytizing atheist. In the man

of good-will, who is ready to obey the law of God so far as he can see that it binds him, and to submit to the yoke of the Church as soon as he is convinced of her claims to be the divine teacher, this instinctive power enables him to recognize at once that which has a ring of truth, to discern without an effort the true from the false. Such a man, when he hears the Catholic doctrine stated on any controverted point, is impelled by his natural love of truth to assent to it. To the voice of nature the supernatural voice, speaking within him, as by divine authority, adds its confirming verdict of approval; the process in his mind is one of immediate intuition, rather than of argument; he is drawn towards the truth almost in spite of himself; he takes to it naturally without exactly knowing why, just as the healthy appetite takes to the food suitable to its needs. He falls in love with its divine loveliness without being able to account even to himself for his yearning after it.

We often hear non-Catholics candidly avow, when thus the truth is set before them, that there is something in it irresistibly attractive. They profess their admiration for its dogmas, generally speaking, and only except a few, which some personal consideration or a misunderstanding of them causes them to look askance at and reject. Very often it is sheer ignorance of what those dogmas really are which gives rise to their dislike of them. What they object to is not any doctrine as taught by the Church, but the caricature which passes current for the reality in the world at large. It is true that the difficulty may partly arise from themselves, that the cloud of ignorance may be mingled with the mist of sin, that those prejudices would somehow melt away if they had not in their actions been false to the guidance of the Light which lightens every man who is born into the world. But the moral barrier could often be overleaped were it not for the gulf of ignorance behind it. It is the double chain which cannot be broken, and which hinders the soul from attaining the truth after which it longs.

I do not hesitate to call it a *gulf* of ignorance; and it is a gulf, the depth and breadth of which it is not easy for one who has always been a Catholic to understand and appreciate, unless he has been brought into contact with it professionally as a priest must needs be in a large city, still Catholics cannot be wholly ignorant of its existence. Now and then some well-educated man lets fall a remark which betrays an entire misconception of the most fundamental doctrines and practices of the Church. Sometimes a popular writer lets us into the secret of his aversion to Catholicity by some portentous misstatement as to what Rome teaches. We ourselves remember a Protestant Episcopal clergyman who, after a visit to France, gravely informed his congregation that in that priest-ridden country he had actually seen a list of the various

prices for which different sins could be forgiven. When the good man was questioned it turned out that, in his ignorance of the language, he had thought that the "Prix des Chaises," often hung up at the door of French cathedrals, was a price-list of the sums received for absolution from sins more or less heinous. Some of our readers will recollect, in Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, his extraordinary calculation of the amount of indulgences which could be gained at Rome in a few hours. Under the false impression that an indulgence of one year meant the curtailment by one year of the time to be spent in purgatory, he comes to the conclusion that, by reciting certain prayers and visiting certain holy places, any ordinary individual might in a very short time shorten their time in purgatory by hundreds or thousands of years, and he points out very naturally the demoralizing effect of such a belief. Such a mistake as this creates a very excusable prejudice, but at the same time is a fatal barrier to the conversion of those who entertain it. It is mistakes like this that every educated Catholic should be able to contradict. It is of the greatest importance to Catholics, not for their own sakes alone, but for the sake of others also, that they should be instructed in the Church's doctrine on points where a little perversion will turn what is reasonable and true into what is quite unreasonable and false. If a Catholic has never been taught the difference between absolute and relative worship, how can he meet successfully the Protestant objection to the "adoration of the Cross?" If he has never been instructed in the doctrine of concomitance, how can he reasonably explain the Church's practice of Communion under one species only? If he has never learned what indulgence really means, and the true significance of an indulgence of three hundred days, or seven years, how can he answer, even in his own mind, the countless difficulties that may be raised against them?

The conclusions which follow from what we have been saying may be stated in a few words. 1. For the maintenance and for the advancement of the Catholic religion nothing is so important as the faithful practice of it by individual Catholics. Nothing but this can secure them from defection; nothing has such a power to win over others as this. The point of primary importance, therefore, is to train the young to purity of morals and to the obedience of faith.

2. This is not enough, or rather it is impossible without a further step. Moral and religious training must include the intellect as well as the will. Instruction is necessary, else ignorance is sure to bring with it its twin companion sin. Our young Catholics must be taught not only to state with accuracy the leading tenets of their faith, but to be able to give a reasonable ex-

planation of them, such as would satisfy the educated inquirer upon those points where Protestants most frequently attack us.

3. It is not desirable to encourage in the average lay Catholic an eagerness for the fray in matters of religion. He will often do better to meet the objector by some ready rejoinder, personal or even irrelevant, than by a serious attempt to argue out the difficulty. If a man begin to talk about the "monstrous conception of eternal fire," it may be a better answer to ask him to withhold his judgment until he has been there for a hundred years or so, than to rouse him to fresh blasphemies by discussing the possibility of hell. We must be on our guard against exposing that which is holy to be trampled upon by the sensualist, or torn by the unbeliever. There is a *disciplina arcani* suitable to these days of modern paganism, as well as that which the Christians practised among the pagans of old.

---

#### QUID EST HOMO? A QUERY ON THE PLURALITY OF WORLDS.

**I**N a learned and interesting article, which the April issue of the QUARTERLY contained, there was expounded a theory on the plurality of worlds, by one highly qualified to handle the subject. The theory is one which is patronized by not a few in the learned world; and, in the article to which we refer, it is brought back to solid principles, and is made to rest on a basis so trustworthy as the doctrine of St. Thomas. The readiness and familiarity with which the reverend and learned writer applies the principles of the Angelic Doctor to the theory before him, is one instance of that philosophical revival which is a bright feature of the day; and which shines on the face of the Church, refreshes our Catholic instincts, and follows up the initiative taken by His Holiness, in the cause of true science and learning. Hoping to see a fuller development given to this question, which is felt to bear somehow in a significant manner upon all our revealed doctrine, we have thought to offer a few remarks upon the arguments presented by the learned essayist; and, if the tenor of our observations seem but critical and so far negative, we would beg to supplement them with a more positive view, to which the reverend essayist barely alluded.

To make clear the full weight and significance of his speculation,