



# THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC QUARTERLY REVIEW

VOL. XXII.—OCTOBER, 1897.—No. 88.

## WHAT DO WE READ?

“Variæ profecto atque innumerabiles sunt inimicorum calliditates artesque nocendi : sed cum primis est plena periculorum intemperantia scribendi, disseminandique in vulgus quæ prave scripta sunt. Nihil enim cogitari potest perniciosius ad inquinandos animos per contemptum religionis perque illecebras multas peccandi.”—*Const. Apost. de prohib. et cens. libr.*, viii. Kal. Febr., 1897.

**T**HE new Apostolical Constitution on the prohibition and censure of books has met a want long felt by Catholics at large, and particularly by those who are charged with the direction of consciences. It was evident to them that some of the laws bearing upon this subject were no longer applicable, but it was equally evident that the danger of indiscriminate reading was never so great as it is in our age, in which, as the Holy Father reminds us, “almost every doctrine entrusted by our Saviour to the keeping of His Church, for the salvation of souls, is questioned and attacked.” Thence arose in the minds of many a feeling of uncertainty and perplexity, which has now been removed by the authoritative declaration of the Church. She is the divinely constituted guardian of faith and morality, and in that capacity she has the right and the duty to censure and prohibit such writings as endanger either the one or the other, and to remove the censure and prohibition when the danger has ceased to exist.

This principle, unhesitatingly admitted by all Catholics, underlies the General Decrees, published together with the new Apostolical Constitution. All those Decrees, as will appear at a glance, fall quite naturally under the two heads of faith and morality. Those relating to morality, in so far as morality, in its restricted sense, is synonymous with chastity or modesty and is directly opposed to lasciviousness or indecency, do not concern us at present. They do not perceptibly modify previously existing laws, nor do they particularly affect English-speaking Catholics ; but

the Decrees bearing directly on faith, and therefore indirectly also on morality in its broader sense of conformity to the whole law of God, have a special relevancy. They are chiefly the following:

1. All books condemned before the year 1600, either by the Sovereign Pontiffs or Œcumenical Councils, and not mentioned in the new Index [to be published hereafter], are to be considered as condemned in the same manner as formerly, excepting such as are permitted by these General Decrees.

2. Books of apostates, heretics, schismatics and all writers whatsoever which champion the cause of error, or which in any way undermine the foundations of religion, are absolutely forbidden.

3. Books of non-Catholics, treating *ex professo* of religion, are likewise forbidden, unless it is certain that they contain nothing contrary to Catholic faith.

4. Books of the aforesaid authors which do not treat *ex professo* of religion, but touch only, in passing, upon truths of faith, are not to be considered as forbidden by ecclesiastical law until they are condemned by a special decree.

The first three General Decrees just quoted call for no comment, but the fourth needs a word of explanation. It is to be remarked, in the first place, that formerly all books written by "heretics," even though they did not treat *ex professo* of religion, were prohibited "until examined and approved." This law, which was considered by theologians as already tacitly abrogated, is now explicitly repealed; and happily so, because, without some relaxation in this matter, English-speaking Catholics would be in a state of perpetual anxiety. For not only are most of the books at their disposal written by non-Catholics, but they frequently treat, in passing, of religion and the truths of faith. Even the atheistic scientist cannot wholly prescind from religion or avoid all allusion to it. The reason is obvious. We meet God everywhere in His creation; to meet Him is to be put in relation with Him, and to express our relation to Him in words is to treat of religion.

It is to be further remarked that the Decree under consideration refers to a prohibition by the positive law of the Church, and not to a prohibition by the natural law; for it is expressly stated that the books in question "are not to be considered as forbidden by *ecclesiastical* law until they are condemned by a special decree." Now, it is plain that, previous to any special decree of the ecclesiastical tribunal, some books which treat only incidentally of religion may be forbidden by the natural law, because they may be an occasion of grave danger to souls. However well-intentioned non-Catholic writers may be, they are liable, when treating of religion, to fall into many serious errors against Catholic faith and morality; and errors incidentally, and perhaps inadvertently, introduced are often the most pernicious.

If in the very title of a work the writer's bigotry betrays itself, if definite charges are preferred which can be traced to their source, if Catholic tenets are openly assailed or Catholic practices

grossly travestied, the sincere Catholic is instantly upon his guard. Disgusted by the absurdity of the allegations or the coarseness of the language, he will fling the book aside; or if with due permission he has the courage to wade through it, he will find little difficulty in clearing the Church from the vulgar imputations which are cast upon her. But if a tone of friendliness is affected, if hackneyed calumnies are carefully discarded, if insinuations and innuendoes are substituted for direct attack, if, under the garb of literature or science, plausible misrepresentations of Catholic doctrines are stealthily introduced, the ordinary reader is thrown off his guard. Fascinated by the novel way in which the subject is presented, he loses sight of its religious aspect. He is not shocked by the grossest blasphemies because they are clothed in decorous language; he accepts the merest sophisms as arguments because they appeal to his vanity; and, before he is fully aware of it, he is half won over. Soon he surrenders himself completely to the spell. He is like one hypnotized by another; he sees with the eyes of another, he hears with the ears of another, he thinks with the thoughts of another. Now, in this respect English-speaking Catholics are at a great disadvantage, which must not be lost sight of.<sup>1</sup>

They are constantly exposed to a thousand subtle and perilous influences which must be counteracted and, if possible, neutralized by a judicious application of the principles either explicitly enunciated or at least implicitly contained in the New Apostolical Constitution. It will be useful for us, therefore, to make an accurate study of the situation in which we find ourselves and of the duties which it imposes upon us.

### I.

Some have called the English language a Protestant language. Others have considered this assertion so absurd that they have thought it sufficiently refuted by saying that it is just as reasonable to talk of Protestant arithmetic or of Protestant penmanship as to talk of a Protestant language; and, sooth to say, the assertion does seem a little harsh. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which it is perfectly correct.

"Certain masters of composition," writes Cardinal Newman, "as Shakespeare, Milton and Pope, the writers of the Protestant Bible and Prayer-Book, Hooker and Addison, Swift, Hume and Goldsmith, have been the making of the English language. . . . Men of great ability have taken it in hand, each in his own day, and have done for it what the master of a gymnasium does for the bodily frame. They have formed its limbs and developed its

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<sup>1</sup> *Dublin Review*, 1840, "Prejudices, etc."

strength; they have endowed it with vigor, exercised it in suppleness and dexterity and taught it graces."<sup>1</sup> Most of these have been Protestants, and they have impressed upon the language a distinctively Protestant character, just as the great pagan masters of Latin composition impressed upon the language of ancient Rome a distinctively pagan character.

The Protestant character of the language shows itself both negatively and positively. Negatively it shows itself in the absence of appropriate words to express, with precision, the ideas that we mean to convey, when writing on Catholic subjects. A language, like a people, is not Christianized or Catholicized at once. Only after a long and gradual absorption and assimilation of Catholic thought is it fully adapted and consecrated to the service of God and of the Church. How slow and tedious this process is will be readily understood by any one who reflects how many centuries it took before Latin became, in the hands of the Fathers and theologians of the Church, the vehicle that it now is of Catholic doctrine and devotion. The same thing may be said of English; our philosophical and ascetical writers have only just begun to build up a terminology which is both English and Catholic. Positively the Protestant character of the language shows itself in the presence of words designedly offensive to Catholic feeling. Words often have a meaning not warranted by their derivation or composition, but due solely to the use that has been arbitrarily made of them. An obvious example is furnished by certain nicknames which, apart from the association of ideas, seem harmless enough. Those whose memory goes back to the days of "Know-Nothingism" or "Native-Americanism" may recall the irritation of a German or Irish boy when his companions dubbed him "Dutchy" or "Micky." Unless he was of a very pacific disposition, he thought a youthful duel quite in order. He was stung to the quick, not so much because the epithet was meant to express the deliberate contempt entertained for him by the speaker, as because it was supposed to be proof sufficient that he was a foreigner, who deserved to be outlawed on the free soil of America. Somewhat in the same manner, there are numerous words in our vocabulary, such as "Romanist" and "Papist," which not merely imply bigotry and contempt, but which appeal so strongly to inherited prejudice that they pass as arguments admitting of no reply.

What is true of language is still truer of literature, as distinguished from mere language. Literature is the thought of past ages preserved in print. It is not a few random words, cast upon

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<sup>1</sup> *Idea of a University*, "English Catholic Literature, 3."

the air and lost in empty space, but a force stored away in the library, as the electric spark is stored away in the battery, ready to burst forth and do its work when it finds materials properly disposed. Rousseau's mad paradoxes, preserved in print, kindle revolutions in the boulevards of Paris; Proudhon's communistic maxims raise a storm in the haymarket of Chicago. True, they have been refuted a thousand times over. But all to no purpose. Let some demagogue repeat them to the hungry mob, and depend upon it that they will produce their necessary effect. Such as is the thought of a people, preserved in its literature, such, as a rule, will be its social, moral and religious condition. It is like an element in solution which you can neutralize, but which you cannot destroy.

Now, English thought, as expressed in literature, has been, and still is, mainly Protestant. "We [Catholics] are but a portion of the vast English-speaking, world-wide race," again writes Cardinal Newman, "and are but striving to create a current in the direction of Catholic truth, when the waters are rapidly flowing the other way. In no case can we, strictly speaking, form an English literature; for by the literature of a nation is meant its classics, and its classics have been given to England, and have been recognized as such long since. . . . We must take things as they are, if we take them at all. . . . We Catholics, without consciousness and without offence, are ever repeating the half sentences of dissolute playwrights and heretical partizans and preachers. So tyrannous is the literature of a nation; it is too much for us."<sup>1</sup>

An ancient general is said to have conquered and almost annihilated a nation by poisoning the wells and water-courses of the country; so that, while the men fell upon the battle-field, the women and children wasted away with disease in their homes. In civilized warfare such a practice has long since been abandoned. But in English literature it has been systematically pursued up to a recent date. From the very beginning of the so-called Reformation, the English press and pulpit became the ready tools of royalty, and overflowed with falsehood, calumny and ridicule of everything that was most sacred to Catholics. They represented belief in the papal supremacy as treason to the country, construed recusancy into idolatry, and spiced their denunciations with blasphemous attacks upon the doctrine of transubstantiation, the "worship" of the saints, the "adoration" of relics and images, the sale of indulgences carried on by the "Popish" priests, and the license to commit sin granted by the "Romish" Church. Meanwhile Catholic works were excluded from the English realm by

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<sup>1</sup> *Id. ibid.*, 1, 3.

royal order. An especial license of the pseudo-Archbishop of Canterbury was necessary, in order to import any "Popish book or pamphlet published beyond the seas"; and such license was granted "upon this condition only, that any of them be not dispersed or showed abroad, but first brought to him [the intruded archbishop] or to some of . . . [the] privy council, that so they may be delivered, or directed to be delivered, forth unto such persons only as by them or some of them shall be thought most meet persons, upon good considerations and purposes, to have the reading of them."<sup>1</sup>

In this manner English literature, during the period of its formation and development, was placed under exclusively Protestant influence. The "well of English undefiled" was poisoned, and its waters have come down to us impregnated with Protestant thought, Protestant views and Protestant principles of action. History, works of general information and education, philosophy and physical science, light literature and the newspaper, have all been enlisted in the service of error, and made to do battle against the Church.

## II.

History, according to Cicero, is the "torch of truth"; but during the last three centuries, so far from answering to this definition, it has been, in the words of De Maistre, "a conspiracy against truth." Until recent years this was the case especially with English history. "It would seem," wrote an able critic in 1840, "as if the writers of England had acted under a sort of necessity of fate; as if their pen, like Anacreon's lyre, had a will of its own, independent and uncontrolled by the writer, and [had given] forth its voice but to a single theme, turned by a hidden instinct to the one subject, and made all others subject to it alone."<sup>2</sup> History written from a Protestant standpoint—and scarcely any other was accessible to the English reader—was not merely fiction, but a tissue of lies manufactured out of whole cloth. Conjecture was offered instead of recognized authorities; coarse and scurrilous declamation was substituted for solid proofs; isolated facts, misconceived or misinterpreted, were made the basis of the crudest speculation.

Not only bigoted partisans, like Hume and Gibbon, but authors who are generally considered reliable, did not scruple, when treating of Catholic subjects, to pervert and distort facts, to garble and invent with more than poetic license. Thus, Hallam, whom the English "Quarterly Review" once denounced as "blindly partial to the Catholic party," writes, in his "Constitutional History":

<sup>1</sup> *Styry's Life of Archbishop Whitgift.*

<sup>2</sup> *Dublin Review*, as above.

"The saints, but more especially the Virgin, are almost exclusively popular deities of that religion (*i.e.*, the Catholic). All that *Polytheism* was swept away by the Reformers."<sup>1</sup> Even Blackstone, in his "Commentaries on Law," by way of a little historical digression, entertained his readers with the "importation from Rome of the whole farrago of superstitious novelties engendered by the blindness and corruption of the monks—transubstantiation, communion in one kind, the worship of the saints and images." . . . "Newfangled theories," he solemnly added, "were invented, and indulgences were sold to the wealthy *for liberty to sin without danger* . . . . penance was enjoined . . . . and that penance was commuted for money . . . . men were taught to believe that *founding a monastery a little before death would atone for a life of incontinence, disorder and bloodshed.*"<sup>2</sup>

Examples of this kind, which might be indefinitely multiplied, show what extravagant fables were related and accepted as historical truth. They are a sad commentary on the prejudice of the writers and on the credulity of the readers. At the same time they are very instructive, because they explain the mental attitude of the English-speaking public towards the Catholic Church. Fortunately, a feeling of honesty and fairness is beginning to prevail over narrow bigotry and partisan spirit. Since the state archives have been thrown open and state papers have become public property, history is being rewritten, and the unjust verdict of the past is being reversed. German Protestant historians like Hurter, Voigt, and others, gave the death-blow to romancing in history, A German Protestant historian has vindicated the Church in the Galileo question, and an English clergyman of the Established Church has painted the characters of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth in darker colors than Catholic writers had ventured to do. But even before their day our own Catholic Lingard had led the way and partly disarmed prejudice by his publication of original documents. Within the last few years the learned Catholic historian, Janssen, and his continuator, Dr. Pastor, have shaken Protestantism, and especially Lutheranism, to its foundations in its very stronghold, by bringing to light the hidden things of darkness, hitherto carefully kept from the public gaze. In brief, the new critical school of historians, who are ransacking all the libraries and archives of Europe in search of original manuscripts, comparing texts, weighing authorities and sifting evidence, has already rendered great service to Catholic truth, and the probability is that it will render still greater service in future. Who now would

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i., p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> Italics are ours.

picture the Middle Ages as an unbroken night of ignorance and corruption? Who would represent the "Sicilian Vespers" and "St. Bartholomew's Day" as instances of wholesale butchery instigated by the sanguinary policy of Rome? Who would refer to the Inquisition as to a "tribunal of horrors," in which the cruel Church authorities condemned and wantonly tortured innocent men for maintaining their right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience? Who would write a book on the "Alliance of Popery and Heathenism," or on the "Apostasy of the Pope, the Man of Sin and the Child of Perdition"?<sup>1</sup> Who would call the Popes "pageants or monsters that commonly owed their rise or downfall to crime," or represent St. Gregory VII. as the heartless Hildebrand, who made a great emperor go to Canossa and shiver in the cold of winter, for courageously defending his civil independence? Who would describe Henry VIII. as the "bluff and honest Hal," or Queen Elizabeth as the "good Virgin-Queen Bess," or Mary Tudor as "Bloody Mary," or Mary, Queen of Scots, as a "fiend in human flesh"? None but history-mongers, who make up by unblushing effrontery for want of research, and by a flippant style for want of fairness. Nothing but bad faith or gross ignorance can explain the rehearsal of tales which have been blown to the winds and burst like soap-bubbles. Most of the so-called "Controverted Points of History" are no longer controverted by writers who value their reputations as historians. Documentary evidence is so strongly in favor of the Catholic side as to remove all reasonable doubt.

A great change of tone is also noticeable in works of popular information, such as dictionaries, encyclopædias, miscellanies, libraries and school-manuals. It has not been many years since writers of that sort of books, instead of giving us correct definitions of Catholic terms or explanations of Catholic practices, went deliberately out of their way to malign the Church and represent her doctrines as "unchristian," "blasphemous," "corrupt," "absurd" and "monstrous."

Not only D'Israeli's "Curiosities of Literature," which used to serve the half-educated as "a repertory of all sorts of scraps, odds and ends of learning," but also "Chambers' Encyclopædia," formerly kept on almost every bookshelf as a source of general

<sup>1</sup> Subjects like these entered into the current literature of England and America, and were read as so much inspiration by devout Protestants scarcely more than a hundred years ago. Nowadays they are either wholly avoided or presented in less offensive language, and the attack is directed against Christianity in general almost as much as against Catholicity in particular. Thus, Draper, in his *Conflict of Religion and Science*, while aiming his shafts mainly at the Catholic Church, would have us believe (p. 42) that even from the very earliest days there was an amalgamation of Christianity and paganism. Mr. Draper trips frequently upon history as well as upon logic.



information, and even the "British Encyclopædia," called with pride "a national work," indulged in ill-digested tirades against Catholics, and repeated nursery-tales as historical facts. "Transubstantiation" was called "that arch-legerdemain of the Romish priests." "The worship of the true God," we were informed, "was exchanged [by the Romanists] for the worship of bones, bits of wood (said to be of the true cross) and the images of saints." "The genuine religion of Jesus was utterly unknown." [In the opinion of Catholics] "an accumulation of crimes can be dissipated by a few orisons," and the "venal priest, claiming to hold the place of God, can traffic with the divine power at a very moderate price." The Jesuits, we were assured, had *Monita Secreta* (secret instructions) communicated to the leading men, but carefully kept from the public, and even from the common members of the order. The published constitutions, except for the fact that they made the rank and file blind tools of designing leaders, were fair enough; but the *Secret Instructions* were a mystery of cunning and iniquity. Cardinal Bellarmine (a Jesuit, of course) taught that, "if the Pope forbid the exercise of virtue and command that of vice, the Roman Church, under pain of sin, is bound to abandon virtue for vice." "The worship paid to the Virgin Mary in Spain and Italy exceeds that which is given to the Son or the Father"; so says D'Israeli, who goes on describing that worship in terms which a sense of propriety prevents us from quoting.

These are a few extracts from books, at one time regarded as standard works. That such things should have been written when bigotry had shut out the light of reason is not surprising. That some of them should have been reprinted in a recent edition of the "British Encyclopædia" needs no other explanation than that they were supplied by that most unreliable of authorities, the Rev. Mr. Littledale. That they should be believed, in the face of the evidence now accessible to all, argues a degree of credulity not reached even by those good folk who still persist in believing in the existence of "Diana Vaughan" and in her satanic revelations. In striking contrast with the books referred to is the "American Encyclopædia," whose articles upon Catholic subjects are mostly, if not exclusively, from the pens of Catholics.

What has been said of works of popular information may likewise be said of school-manuals and text-books. Time was when it was a part even of secular education to distort and pervert the language of Catholic devotion, and to ridicule the usages and ceremonies of the Church. Here are some specimens, familiar to every scholar. Campbell in his "Rhetoric," still in use as a book

of reference, approvingly selects, as a specimen of the humorous, a coarse extract from "Hudibras" about

"Crosses, relics, crucifixes,  
Beads, pictures, rosaries and pixes:  
The tools of working out salvation  
By mere mechanic operation."

Whately, in his "Rhetoric," gives as an example of a metaphor, "the *polluted* stream of *Romish* tradition"; and in his "Logic," taught not many years ago in Catholic institutions, he adduces some misconceived or misinterpreted doctrines of the Catholic Church as an exemplification of a *sophism*, and warns the reader against some ridiculous ambiguity, which, he adds, "has greatly favored the Church of *Rome*."

The text-book of geography, formerly in common use in our Catholic schools, after instructing the pupil that the nations which ranked highest in point of culture are called *enlightened*, informed him that among those which had attained to this excellence in the social scale were the "*Protestant cantons of Switzerland*." Why not the Catholic cantons as well? However, discrimination of that sort, though embittering, is harmless as compared with the bigotry which is condensed into some manuals of history specially prepared for the use of the public schools. All the venom contained in a diluted form in the larger volumes of some discredited writers of history is carefully extracted and administered in strong doses to the youth of the land. Surely, it needs no special rule of the "Index" to convince Catholic parents that they cannot in conscience allow their children to read such parodies of Catholic doctrine and Catholic morals as are found in the historical compendiums by Myers and Freeman, and in the "Story of Liberty" by Coffin. The discussions in public print called forth by these books have made it evident to all how many snares are laid for the faith of Catholic children. But they have also made it evident how willing our non-Catholic fellow-citizens are to do us justice, if our grievances are calmly and clearly represented to them. The "Resolutions" lately passed by an overwhelming majority of votes in the Indiana House of Representatives against "a certain book entitled 'The Story of Liberty'" are an eloquent tribute to the fairmindedness of the whole body, no less than to the intrepidity of the Catholic member who introduced them, and to the zeal of the priest who first exposed the fraud practiced upon the community.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Hon. Peter Wallrath and the Rev. A. B. Oechtering, both of Indiana.

## III.

The signs of the times are certainly hopeful. Still it is not prudent to trust them too much. While the anti-Catholic bias is, on the whole, weakening and gradually disappearing, it is as strong and unreasonable as ever in the domain of science, both metaphysical and physical. And naturally so. The early Protestant Reformers had an instinctive dread of philosophy. They decried clear statements, accurate distinctions and close reasoning as scholastic subtilities, metaphysical hair-splitting and logic-chopping. Of the English Reformers, in particular, it has been said that if they deigned to employ arguments against Catholics they resorted to it, not for the sake of discovering the truth, but solely, in the spirit of Luther, "for the lust of triumph and to annoy the Pope." The consequence has been fatal to philosophy; indeed, it is scarcely too much to affirm that, outside of the Catholic schools, philosophy has ceased to exist in England. The decline began with Lord Bacon, whom Cardinal Newman calls "the most orthodox of the Protestant philosophers." For, though he undoubtedly rendered great services to the natural sciences by the stress which he laid on observation and experiment, he also did no little harm by his apparent disregard for analytic principles, without which observation and experiment have no scientific value; so that, in a certain sense, the fruit already contained the worm which was some day to consume it. Those who followed the sage of Verulam were sciolists, without the mental discipline required for philosophical speculation; they were empiricists who relied upon their own observations, without sufficient knowledge of metaphysical principles to interpret those observations correctly. They observed the phenomena, now of the material world, now of their own minds, and they ended by becoming materialists who admitted the existence of matter only, idealists who recognized the existence of mind only, or sceptics who doubted the existence of both matter and mind. From Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume, down to the present, the descent has continued with an ever accelerating speed.

Meanwhile the natural sciences have become the battle-ground of irreligion. Men of undeniable industry and talent for research, but poorly equipped with philosophical principles and often bitterly hostile to the Church, enter the field and strive to occupy every vantage-ground. Many of them make it their aim to show, by a long array of so-called facts, that there is an irreconcilable conflict between science and Christianity; and Christianity with them means Catholicity.<sup>1</sup> Geology, palæontology, biology, an-

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<sup>1</sup> Draper: *Conflict of Religion and Science*, Preface, pp. 10, 11.

thropology, ethnology, archæology are all called upon in succession to do battle against the Church. When the facts discovered do not lend themselves readily to the task they are carefully manipulated, or others that have no actual existence are fabricated to suit. It is never admitted that the real facts are susceptible of various and contradictory explanations, and that, therefore, they prove nothing. It is not hinted that, though some new researches have been made, all the difficulties that can be legitimately drawn therefrom against religion were substantially brought forward and answered ages ago. Often it is not even seriously attempted to prove the pretended conclusions of science. The object is to undermine the foundations of religion and to disturb the minds of the faithful; and as solid arguments are wanting, recourse is had to sophistry. Such is the temper in which Dr. Draper, of New York, and Dr. Andrew White, late President of Cornell University, wrote the one his "History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science," the other "A History of the Warfare of Science and Theology in Christendom."<sup>1</sup>

Natural science, having become largely materialistic, has, in its turn, reacted on philosophy, until the true notion of philosophy has been lost. Physics are confounded with metaphysics, physiology with psychology, matter with spirit, manners with morals. Cut loose from the ancient moorings, men have drifted about upon a sea of doubt until they have landed in hopeless agnosticism and pessimism—the philosophy of nescience and the ethics of despair. This is the sort of thing which is palmed off on the world as the wisdom of the nineteenth century, which is purchased as such by the great libraries and taught as such in the universities of the country. There is now before us the *prospectus* of a "School of Philosophy" attached to a well-known university.<sup>2</sup> The school has a rich endowment and a long list of salaried professors. It claims to be "devoted to the free and unhampered quest and propagation of truth." Its courses of instruction embrace "a complete, if tentative, system of psychology, based on the results of the experimental investigation of consciousness"—"a drill-course on the psychology of sensation"—"a drill-course on the psycho-physics of action"—"lectures on psycho-physical measurement-methods"—"a rapid survey of philosophy during Greek, Roman and mediæval periods, the greater part of the year [being] devoted to the theories and problems of modern speculation . . . and especially to an examination of the philosophical meaning and

<sup>1</sup> Such books seem to us to fall under the second rule of the General Decrees cited above, and therefore to be absolutely forbidden to all who have not obtained leave from the proper authority.

<sup>2</sup> "Sage School of Philosophy," Cornell University.

importance of the notion of Evolution and Development"—“lectures on the Development of Moral Ideas among mankind in primitive, ancient and modern times . . . primitive Religion, the origin of religious ideas, cults, rites, etc.” Among the authors to be read or studied are the chief materialistic psychologists of modern times, besides Locke, Hume, Berkeley, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, Schopenhauer, etc. Some slight notice is taken of Aristotle and Plato, but not a word about the great Catholic thinkers and master-minds—not one of them is so much as mentioned by name. The *prospectus* closes with an advertisement offering to supply the universities and schools of the country with professors and teachers, who are apparently being manufactured in large numbers and at short notice. “*Sapienti sat.*”

In our high-schools the case stands even worse. The philosophy taught in them is commonly nothing but a history of false systems, with all the vagaries and aberrations of the human mind, to some of which the learned professor gives his adhesion. Said a bright lad, presumably a Catholic, to a professor who had been expounding Spinoza: “I understand you to hold, professor, that you are a part of the divinity.” “Correct.” “And that I am a part of the divinity.” “Correct.” “But you also told us that we must worship the divinity; must I worship you, sir?” The professor felt decidedly uncomfortable; the pupil left the school-room, never to reappear in it. There was in the same school at least one other Catholic pupil, a girl, who laid her case before the writer of this article. She was preparing for a teacher’s certificate. If she did not follow that course of pantheistic philosophy, she had only one alternative: to take anatomy instead, which was seemingly regarded as a cognate science, not very dissimilar from experimental psychology, which is looked upon as advanced philosophy; but her maidenly modesty shrank from that study. How mighty is modern science! It can replace, or displace, almost anything! True, it has been pronounced “bankrupt” by a very competent authority, and some of its latest conclusions are manifestly an insult to common sense; yet, for all that, we may take it for granted that its terminology will be perpetuated, to the great detriment of true science and the embarrassment of real scholars. The “*survival of the fittest, struggle for life, natural selection, anthropoid ape,*” and other terms equally *scientific*, will continue to figure in science-primers, and will be explained as expressive of the highest modern wisdom to the callow youth of our public schools; and at the same time there will be sown in their minds the seeds of materialism and agnosticism, together with a hatred of the Catholic Church, the inveterate enemy of science and progress (!).

## IV.

But if philosophy is banished from the schools, it seems to have found a refuge with tourists and travellers, with novelists and journalists—in brief, with the writers of light literature. Without having a university degree, they all wear the doctor's cap and philosophize, after their own fashion, about the Catholic Church. They interpret her doctrines and her ceremonies, and portray the baneful effects of her devotions upon the multitude or upon the heroes and heroines of their stories in so lively a manner that the incautious reader is in danger of accepting as facts what are merely the hallucinations of a morbid imagination. Here is an amusing instance in point: A writer who makes great pretensions to scholarship visits Spain, and, as a matter of course, publishes his valuable experience among the benighted "Romanists" of that country. Very soberly he assures us that they not merely practically make the Virgin Mary the "equal of God," but that they actually call her so in their prayers. He had heard them invoke her as "Deipara." He remembered enough of Latin to know that "Dei" means "of God," and that "par," to which our English word "pair" is related, means "equal;" therefore he concluded that "Deipara" means the "equal of God." But he did not know or remember that "para" is derived from a Latin root, signifying the same thing as our English word "parent," and that "Deipara" means not the "equal," but the "parent or mother of God." The enterprising tourist might hear us invoking the Blessed Virgin daily by the same title.

The daughter of an Anglican minister, well known by her writings, composes a novel in which there occur several Catholic characters. They are well drawn and have many amiable qualities; but unfortunately, like all Catholics, following the teachings of their Church, they are constantly doing wrong that good may come of it. They can't help it, you see; it is the effect of Catholic training.

But why multiply examples? Protestant fiction, no matter under what name it disguises itself, from the "revelations of converted priests" or of "escaped nuns," for "men" or "women" only, down to the goody-goody narratives in children's story-books, is the stronghold of anti-Catholic traditions. According to these *veracious* accounts, "Romanists" are either wilful idolaters and worshipers of "graven images," who lead licentious lives and purchase the forgiveness of their crimes from the priest, or else they are innocent dupes who have never yet seen a Bible, and who become Protestants as soon as they begin to read the "holy book." Nuns are either "witches" who "kidnap" or "decoy" young maidens from the fair world into the gloomy cloister, or they are

deluded victims, detained against their will, imprisoned, immured, and praying for some vigilance-committee to come and set them free. Priests are rude and imperious task-masters who extort money from their flocks, or they are sleek and unscrupulous courtiers who wear the clerical gown in order to pose before the world and win its applause. The members of the religious orders are "coarse, uncouth and unwashed monks," too ignorant to administer the sacraments validly; or they are "sly and designing Jesuits," who approach you with a "soft, velvety, cat-like step," then suddenly pounce upon you and hold you tightly in their clutches. With the advance of civilization this latter type is naturally becoming more common. Indeed, according to the Protestant notion, "Jesuits" are ubiquitous and omnigenous. They are not merely the members of the religious order, known as the Society of Jesus; they are all the special agents of Rome, public and private, and these are legion. There are clerical Jesuits and lay Jesuits; there are male Jesuits and female Jesuits; there are avowed Jesuits among the "Romish" priesthood and crypto-Jesuits among the Protestant clergy; there are Jesuits in the United States' Senate and in the English House of Lords, as there are Jesuits in the sculleries and nurseries of devout Protestant families, whose children they seek to pervert. "They are rapidly winding their net around the liberties of the nation."<sup>1</sup>

Here we have struck the key-note of Protestant fiction, and that suffices to determine its character. We need no more. But what of periodical literature, which has assumed such proportions in our days that it usurps the name of the *press*? "Great is journalism," exclaims Carlyle. "Is not every editor a ruler of the world, being a persuader of it?" There is no denying the fact that the *press* has grown to be a mighty factor in human affairs. It creates public opinion, controls politics, dictates laws, makes and unmakes governments. It invades the privacy of domestic life, and even the sanctuary of religion; it presumes to prescribe, not only what men are to eat and drink, but what they are to believe.

Now, it is a subject of complaint the world over that in many lands the secular *press* is in the hands of the bitterest enemies of religion, and that, as a rule, its spirit is decidedly anti-Catholic. Many ponderous quarterlies and monthlies teem with long and malicious articles, whose object is to undermine the foundations of religion. Many weekly and daily newspapers treat the reading

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<sup>1</sup> We quote these words, after Mr. James Britten, from a book commented upon by him in one of his interesting articles on "Protestant Fiction," published as a serial in *The Month*, beginning November, 1895. The extracts which he has made are as amusing as a "Joke-Book."

public to a periodical instalment of crime, sensation and scandal; they insult the feelings of all right-minded men by low and vile caricatures of religious persons and practices, and by the altogether unchristian tone in which they write about all things whatsoever; and, in particular, they disturb the consciences of Catholics by false reports and forged despatches about the Holy See and Church legislation generally, and by articles manifestly intended to foster religious animosity and discord. Yet, on the whole, the secular *press* in this country is, perhaps, quite as respectful to the Church as it is to the Protestant sects; or if it does her the honor of making her the object of special attacks, the reason is it that looks upon her as the only genuine representative of Christianity.

## V.

In general, we are justified in saying that the tone of English literature is far less hostile towards the Church than it used to be. To be sure, Protestant Tract Societies go on reprinting the old stories about the Pope being anti-Christ and the Catholic Church being the "scarlet woman" and the "beast" of the Apocalypse, for the special edification of hymn-singing spinsters and Sunday-school teachers. Protestant religious papers still bristle with anti-popery articles, and Evangelical Alliances draw up and distribute "Resolutions" for the suppression of "Romanism." But ordinarily such things have the same effect on the intelligent public as Burchard's cry of "Rum, Romanism and Rebellion"; the poison contains its own antidote.

As a rule, the attitude of non-Catholic writers towards the Church is not positively aggressive. Like Frederick Harrison, when pushed to the wall by Mr. Wilfred Ward, they affect to ignore the Church altogether as an antiquated system, beneath the notice of our progressive age; or, like Charles Dickens, they make it a point "never [to] publish anything, fact or fiction, which [gives] a favorable view of any one under the influence of the Catholic faith . . . anything which [can] possibly dispose any mind whatever in favor of Romanism, even by the example of a real good man."<sup>1</sup> Such tactics, adopted by well-known writers, are an indication of the general trend of popular literature; or, to use a homely expression, they are "straws which show what way the wind blows." When the non-Catholic secular literature of the day does not openly advocate infidelity, when it does not try to enlist our sympathy and our love for what is condemned by the laws of the Church and of right reason, it at least inculcates indifferentism and naturalism. Running through it all there is a vein

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<sup>1</sup> Miss Martineau's *Autobiogr.*, American edition, vol. ii., page 93.



of anti-Catholic thought and, consequently, of anti-Catholic principles of morality. Nor is the so-called Catholic popular literature quite free from the infection. Many nominally Catholic newspapers, as the learned Dr. Brownson remarked in his day, unknowingly uphold Jacobinical or Protestant principles. The Fathers of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore are no less emphatic when they warn us that not all newspapers which profess to be Catholic really deserve that name, because, though the editors boast of being Catholics, they discredit the Church by their example and their writings, and expose her to ridicule; because they uphold and spread heretical and infidel views, calculated to undermine the authority of the Church and of the State.<sup>1</sup> Many nominally Catholic novels hold up to our admiration characters whose excellence is made to consist in what the laws of the Church and right reason must alike condemn as immoral and vicious.<sup>2</sup>

Literature of this kind, if not worse, is the ordinary mental pabulum of the so-called reading public, and is devoured, especially by the young, with a morbid appetite, which is one of the worst symptoms of our age. Carlyle did not put the case too strongly when he wrote: "Not the wretchedest circulating-library novel which foolish girls thumb and con in remote villages but will help to regulate the actual practical weddings and households of those foolish girls. So 'Celia' felt, so 'Clifford' acted; the foolish Theorem of Life stamped into those young brains comes out a solid Practice one day." The newspaper and the novel are the sources from which many persons draw almost all their information and the rules for their guidance through life. As these abound in error, it is not surprising that even such as are at heart very earnest Catholics often unknowingly hold views at variance with their religion. The poison is so dexterously mixed with the food that the ordinary reader fails to distinguish it. He takes it into his system in infinitesimal doses, and, like the opium-eater, gradually grows so accustomed to it that he is not aware of the effect which it has upon him. It affects his whole mental constitution, shapes his thoughts and his conduct, and forms, or rather deforms, his character. Like the man in the French comedy who had spoken prose for thirty years without knowing it, many Catholics are constantly speaking a Protestant language and defending Protestant principles without in the least suspecting it. Their error is blameless, but it is not harmless. For, as Dr. Brownson

<sup>1</sup> Tit. VII., *De Libr. et Ephem.*, p. 126, n. 228.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Brownson finds this fault even with Lady Fullerton's *Grantley Manor*, which many readers probably regard as a model Catholic novel. Marion Crawford, likewise, is severely and, we think, deservedly censured by several Catholic writers.

observes, "no [such] error is harmless . . . ; every error is, at bottom, an error against the faith or the truth taught by the Church. . . . Errors . . . which do not kill the faith outright may yet impair its soundness, render it weak and sickly, and hinder the free, healthy and vigorous growth of Catholic piety. Even these indirect and remote errors against faith, which may coexist in the mind with a firm faith in the Christian mysteries, conceal the germs of heresy, which some acute, bold and self-willed reasoner may one day develop and mature into a doctrine formally heretical, and which may prove the destruction of thousands, perhaps millions, of souls. All heresies take their rise in popular literature or science. No heresiarch sets out with the express and formal denial of the faith ; for no man, in the outset, intends to be a heresiarch—ever says to himself, 'Go to, now ; let us found a heresy.' His heresy is only the logical development of principles which he finds already incorporated into popular literature and science, already received as axioms by the popular mind, and held by persons of unquestioned orthodoxy. . . . The danger becomes especially great in a Protestant country where we breathe constantly the atmosphere of heresy, and form our literary and scientific tastes and habits by the study of heretical writings."<sup>1</sup>

To put it briefly : The evil adherent even in our least objectionable secular literature is not simply the absence of distinctively Catholic thought, but the presence of anti-Catholic or Protestant thought in a diluted form. The ordinary reader imagines it to be harmless because it seems neutral and colorless ; but just as the spectroscope manifests, in the white light of the stars, the presence of a variety of elements not detected by the naked eye, even so a careful analysis manifests, in the current literature of the day, the presence of many erroneous principles. The evil cannot be altogether prevented, because, as Cardinal Newman remarks, we cannot create a strictly Catholic English literature. If we read English literature at all, we cannot avoid reading much that is more or less at variance with Catholic truth and Catholic thought.

What, then, are we to do ? Shall we confine ourselves to translations from the French, Italian and German ? If we do, we shall fare no better, perhaps worse. Shall we abstain from reading anything except a few pious ascetical works ? No, certainly not. In our days and in our country men and women, boys and girls will read, must read, unless they wish to be considered behind the age. For Catholics it is not a matter of choice, but of duty towards themselves and their religion, not to be outdone by their Protestant or infidel countrymen in acquiring the information befitting

<sup>1</sup> *Brownson's Review*, 1848. Not having by us the doctor's works, we cannot give more exact reference for this extract, made years ago.

their position in society. What, then, are we to do? This is the practical question which we propose to answer briefly before concluding, and if we succeed in doing so satisfactorily, we shall consider that we have done some substantial good. We say, therefore, in the first place, that we should cultivate Catholic instincts and Catholic habits of thought, which will enable us to discern almost spontaneously what is conformable or opposed to the spirit of the Church, to the dogmas of Catholic faith and the laws of Catholic morality. We say, in the second place, that from the mass of non-Catholic publications we should select the least objectionable, and read even these with much caution and discernment.

And what is meant by Catholic instincts? The eagle is said to tend instinctively towards the light of the sun. Just so the mind trained to Catholic habits of thought tends, by a sort of intuition, towards the light of faith. "So alert," writes Cardinal Newman, "is the instinctive power of an educated conscience that by some secret faculty, and without any intelligible reasoning process, it seems to detect moral truth wherever it lies hid, and feels a conviction of its own accuracy which bystanders cannot account for; and this especially in the case of revealed religion, which is one comprehensive moral fact—according to the saying, 'I know my sheep and am known by them.'" Catholic instincts are the result of a thoroughly practical Catholic life, and they are often found in the simple faithful quite as much as in the highly educated; for the mind discerns, without any labored process of reasoning, what is in harmony with its general habits of thought, and the heart is naturally drawn towards what is in sympathy with its virtuous inclinations.

But if our Catholic instincts are to be of any real service to us in detecting and avoiding concealed dangers to faith and morality, we must be able to give a rational account of the faith that is within us. For this purpose it is not sufficient to have attended the parish-school in childhood, to have learned our Catechism, to have said our prayers morning and night, to have heard Mass on Sundays and holidays of obligation, and to have frequented the sacraments, if between times we read nothing but the cheap literature which weighs down the shelves of public libraries and school libraries, and if, in maturer years, we confine ourselves to the daily paper, with its stock of scandal, irreligion and falsehood, and to the thousand and one works of fiction offered for a song by cheap book-stores and news-venders at the street-corners. The Fathers of the last Plenary Council of Baltimore, fully alive to the wants of the times, insist strongly upon this point. In their *Pastoral Letter* they appeal to Catholic parents in the following language:

“Remember, Christian parents, that the development of the youthful character is intimately connected with the development of the taste for reading. Of books, as well as of associations, may be held the wise saying: ‘Show me your company, and I will tell you what you are.’ See, then, that none but good books and newspapers, as well as none but good companions, be admitted to your homes. Train your children to a love of history and biography; inspire them with the ambition to become so well acquainted with the history and doctrines of the Church as to be able to give an intelligent answer to every honest inquirer. Should their surroundings call for it, encourage them, as they grow older, to acquire such knowledge of popularly mooted questions of a scientific or philosophical character as will suffice to make them firm in their faith and proof against sophistry.”

This earnest recommendation of the American hierarchy is not so difficult to observe as some parents may perhaps imagine; for though we have not and cannot hope to have, strictly speaking, a Catholic English literature, we already have a host of thoroughly Catholic writers who may well challenge comparison. In point of style and literary merit Cardinal Manning and Dr. Brownson have few, if any, superiors among modern English writers, while in point of profound thought and close reasoning Dr. Brownson stands forth among his non-Catholic American contemporaries as “an Apollo among satyrs.” Around these two great luminaries there cluster many others, and their number is growing so rapidly that to the unprejudiced mind they seem a galaxy brilliant enough to attract the notice of the least observant. We Catholics sometimes complain, and with reason, that our writers are ignored by the Protestant literary world, or, at least, that they are not assigned the place which they deserve among the literary celebrities of the age. But possibly we ourselves are chiefly to blame for this apparent slight. Too often, it is to be feared, we do not appreciate our writers at their full value; too often, perhaps, we are ignorant of their works and even of their names, while we are fully conversant with the non-Catholic literature of the day. If so, it is not a little to our discredit; for surely, before making the acquaintance of strangers, we ought to be familiar with the members of the household.

Once educated, by the study of Catholic authors, to habits of Catholic thought, and well informed upon the questions at issue between ourselves and our adversaries, we shall run less risk by reading non-Catholic writers, because we shall have the principles by which to test them. Yet even then we should select from the mass of non-Catholic publications such as are least objectionable. “Happily,” as the Fathers of the Council of Baltimore remind us,

“the store of Catholic literature, as well as works which, though not written by Catholics nor treating of religion, are pure, instructive and elevating, is now so large that there can be no excuse for running risk or wasting one’s time with what is inferior, tainted or suspicious.”

Finally, we should not forget that whatever does not bear clearly stamped on its face the seal of Catholic orthodoxy should be read with much discernment. However fair a non-Catholic writer may wish to be, his own habits of thought are apt to betray him into involuntary misrepresentations of Catholic principles. Let us, therefore, apply to everything the touchstone of Catholic truth, and rest assured that whatever cannot stand this test is an error, for truth can never be at variance with truth. Above all, let us never allow the religious doubts that may arise to fix themselves in our minds; and if we do not ourselves find the solution, let us seek it from those who are able to give it. Catholic truth may be temporarily obscured by the clouds of error which pass before it, but it can no more be extinguished than the sun in heaven. “*Magna est veritas et prævalebit.*”

R. J. M.

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