

THE LOGIC OF FAITH.

In matters of controversy, the strength of any position depends upon how far arguments in its favour can be reduced to one central proposition which underlies all dependent issues, and to which they are relative and subordinate. That this truth applies to the discussion of those matters which form the ground of dispute at the present day between Faith and Intellect, it is the object of the following pages to show. The analysis of all the objections which are urged by her enemies against the claims and doctrines of the Catholic Church, reduces the points at issue within the area of the discussion of a single proposition, on the acceptance or rejection of which their separate belief must logically rest. It is with the hope of gaining conciseness in our argument that it has thus been confined entirely to one point of inquiry, which will be found to involve all the secondary questions which may be raised.

Different ages necessarily manifest different methods of attack in the warfare which is ceaselessly carried on between Catholicism and those outside its pale. But the accusation which is urged with most vehemence at the present day against the Church, and which is prompted by the special spirit of the age, is, that she claims dominion over both reason and intellect, and teaches the superiority of faith over both. The result of such teaching is, it is maintained, that, if true, it would oblige man to abuse the noblest capacity that is implanted in him, and that it would lead to a mental paralysis which must necessarily be fatal to all scientific progress. Such a demand apparently leads to the surrender of his chief prerogative, that is, the use of his individual judgment, in favour of what appears to be an intangible and indefinable unreality. The Church's command, *Subjugate intellectum tuum*, which may be seen written by his own hand beneath some of the portraits of her late Pontiff, and which she utters with the same unfaltering voice in this century of science as she did in past ages of ignorance and credulity, seems to those who refuse to examine its real meaning to erect a barrier fatal to all future intellectual progress. That an authoritative faith can override or replace the keenness of trained intellect, is to such minds a theory as hostile to the attainment of ultimate truth as it is unworthy of any intelligence that has kept pace with modern methods of scientific knowledge.

This, then, is the real question at stake. To begin disputing as to separate doctrines of faith while this main point remains untouched, is like the conduct of the general of an attacking force, who spends his hours in anxiety as to how he is to break down the street barriers of a besieged city while as yet he has made no impression on the solidity of its outer wall. On this battle-field, in which issues are to be decided which from their nature concern not merely this life but relate to the possibilities of a future, we see the serried ranks of faith and reason drawn up in opposition, and we would fain behold some messenger advance, bearing a flag of truce, to bid these foes shake hands, and confess themselves friends in disguise.

The characteristics, therefore, of the present day engender on the one hand a not unnatural suspicion on the part of Intellect, and also necessitates on the other, the clearer explanation of the true meaning of the Church, as the representative of Faith. During her long history of nearly two thousand years, her never-ceasing warfare has necessitated the concentration of her attention, first on one, then on another fresh method of attack. And now in the nineteenth century the obligation rests upon her to do the same anew, even if the reiteration of her meaning involves much that has been said before, but which has hitherto not reached the fair hearing of ears none too eager to listen to her claims. As she has survived the troublous epochs in which she battled with internal heresies and endured physical persecution, so now she finds her mission has to be carried on in an age that has never been rivaled in historic time for the rapidity of the progress of experimental science in every direction. The growth of such definite scientific knowledge, the apparently un-

limited extent of discovery and research, are bringing matters hitherto deemed mysterious within the domain of every day experience. Human intellect seems to be dragging forth from nature herself the very secrets of her existence, and uncovering the motive causes of all the varied phenomena she exhibits. It can girdle the world in a few moments of time with an interchange of thought, or project the human voice so that men can converse together as if no intervening space separated them. It has converted the lightly-floating cloud of steam into the mightiest force man has at his command. It has unravelled the mysteries of the book of nature, penetrated the laws of matter, bridged over the spaces which separate the inhabited globe from the rest of the universe of which it forms part. It claims to assign natural causes for the phenomena once regarded as supernatural, and to explain the origin of man's very nature and existence itself. It has compelled the most destructive forces of nature to be subservient to the human will, and in short never was there an age when intellect seemed more to be fulfilling the ancient command: "Fill the earth and subdue it." How, in the midst of all this triumph, can any system dare to think its voice will adduce obedience or anything else than contempt when it says *Subjugate intellectum tuum*, and when it speaks ever and anew of the mysterious faculty of Faith?

Two natural consequences result from this advance of the human race in intellectual progress. The first is, that the very grandeur of the dimensions it has reached has induced the most blind trust in its infallibility as to all subjects both at present and in the future, and has engendered a spirit of depreciation of all matters which do not come within its scope. The second result is, that the tendency which exists in the human mind to lose sight of principles when concentrating its power on the details of scientific research is sometimes increased to such a degree, that even the great underlying truth on which all nature depends, and to which it points, is forgotten in the close study of the separate phenomena she presents. It is well known that to be a specialist on any subject has a direct tendency to warp the mind in one direction, and to produce development of one faculty, often at the expense of all the rest. Can we say that students of natural and physical science at the present day alone escape this danger?

The fact, however, that the Church has numbered within the pale of her obedience some of the greatest intellects, and that she still continues to receive the submission of the ablest men in every branch of scientific knowledge, is evidence that her claim is not one to be dismissed lightly or without examination. Men of high ability, or even men of ordinary common sense, do not make large sacrifices, undergo self denial, or adopt and obey a system which entails restraint on some of the strongest instincts in human nature, without adequate reason for such a choice of action. Minds that have advanced far along the various paths of scientific knowledge, and have learnt to prove and demonstrate each step of the road they have trodden, would not be likely suddenly to relapse into puerility where before they exercised the full force of their reasoning powers, or to confess themselves dependent for any truth upon a faculty which, if unreal, is but imagination under a different name. And although the assent, when given by some of the most cultivated intellects of the present day, should at least warn men that it is worth their while to examine its basis before passing judgment upon it.

What then is the real ground of antagonism which is supposed to exist between intellect and Faith? Its real origin is to be found in those individuals who manifest that want of respect each towards the other, which from time to time has led them on either side to intrude into the true province of the other. Thus, in the name of Intellect it is said to Faith: "You profess to teach matters for which you can produce no adequate demonstration, and to compel my will to own, as true, propositions which lie altogether outside the possibility of human knowledge." Faith replies: "Your very accusation proves that your resources have their limit, and that human knowledge, so