

exert an influence such as we have spoken of, and they permit their children to read them. Catholics have no more right to read such papers, or to permit their children to read them, than they have to associate with, or to permit their children to associate with, irreverent or bad persons, or with those who sneer and scoff at the true faith.

The easiest and most effective safeguard against this is furnished by good Catholic literature, and by that literature in the form of magazines and newspapers. For, as the best way to prevent the ingress of foul air into a house is to provide a constant influx of pure air, so the easiest and best way to keep bad newspapers out of a family, is to furnish it with pure, sound Catholic newspapers.

But here it is necessary to distinguish; and in the distinctions we make we are simply following instructions of our Holy Father, Leo XIII., and of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore. There are newspapers which in spirit and in contents are truly Catholic, and there are others which are professedly Catholic, but in actual fact are most un-Catholic, and most of them decidedly anti-Catholic. Referring to this the Fathers of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, whose Acts and Decrees have been approved by the Holy See, have made the following emphatic declaration:

"Whilst we commend Catholic newspapers, we admonish the faithful that not all newspapers which parade the name Catholic are truly Catholic. Their writers boast that they are Catholic, but by their example and writings they disgrace that holy name and expose it to scorn."

Thus we are confronted with the question: "What is a truly Catholic newspaper?" The answer to this question is plainly given in the decree from which we have just quoted:

"Let that only be held to be a Catholic newspaper which sets forth and defends the doctrines of the Church, narrates the progress of the Church at home and abroad, and is ready to submit in all things to the authority of the Church."

Here three characteristic marks or tests of a newspaper that are truly Catholic are plainly stated.

The first is that it "sets forth and defends the doctrines of the Church."

It may be well, in view of erroneous notions, prevailing in some quarters, to dwell briefly on this.

It is the Doctrine of the Church, not the notions which writers for Catholic newspapers may "evolve out of their own inner consciousness," or pick up and adopt from any and every source, that they are to set forth and defend. Catholic newspapers are not authoritative teacher and expounders of what their editor, or other writers for them, in the exercise of their own individual judgment, may suppose or imagine is, or ought to be, true Christian doctrine. That doctrine it is for them to receive and accept, without hesitation or question, and in a truly docile spirit, as it comes to them through the divinely constituted authorities of the Church, which is its divinely appointed perpetual custodian and infallible teacher. It is the honourable work and duty of editors of and writers for Catholic newspapers to declare that doctrine as thus taught to them, and to defend it against those who assail and misrepresent it.

It is impossible to emphasize this distinction too strongly in this age of almost universal license and so-called "free-thought." Owing to this distinction not being constantly kept in mind, not a few writers for Catholic newspapers have egregiously erred and done great harm whilst sincerely, perhaps, intending to do good. We repeat it, and with emphasis, Catholic newspapers, or their editors or writers, have no mission, no authority to decide—and it is simply the height of arrogance for them to presume to attempt to decide—upon what is Catholic doctrine. Their work is to declare that doctrine as they have received it from the Church, and to defend it against those who assail it, misrepresent it, and who would pervert and corrupt it if they could.

Nor is this minimizing or in the least degree degrading the office of the Catholic newspaper. To take an example from purely human pursuits, a lawyer, however learned and eminent he may be, does not consider himself degraded when he submits to the decisions of the court. To go up still higher and take an example from the holy Apostles, St. Paul expressly says that he taught not his own doctrine but that

which had been taught to him. He emphatically declares that if he or an angel from heaven taught any other doctrine, "Let him be anathema."

The second characteristic of a truly Catholic newspaper is a very plain one. It is that it keep its readers acquainted with the progress of the Church in its own vicinity and in other regions. On the importance of this surely it is not necessary to dilate. We all naturally desire to read of those things which most deeply concern us. A dutiful child is interested in all that concerns its mother. A true patriot reads with intense interest all that pertains to his country's condition, its struggles against adverse circumstances, its success in overcoming them, its prosperity and progress. If his country is engaged in war he notes with profound concern all the movements of its armies and those of its adversaries, its victories and defeats, its successes and reverses. He rejoices over the one and mourns over the other.

In like manner the true children of the Church are deeply concerned in all that pertains to the condition and progress of the Church not only at home but throughout the world. To inform its readers respecting these things is one of the most important parts of the work of a Catholic newspaper.

Obedience to ecclesiastical authority is the third characteristic laid down by the Council of Baltimore. On this it is unnecessary here to dwell. The obligation is imperative and its meaning unmistakable. We shall, however, have something further to say on this subject in a subsequent part of our paper.

Elsewhere, but in the same decree from which we have been quoting, the Council of Baltimore lays down another requisite of a truly Catholic newspaper. It says:

"It is especially necessary that whatever they (Catholics) themselves write, and whatever they insert in their papers, taken from others, shall accord with the laws of Christian charity and moderation. And even when they are defending our most holy religion against the accusations and calumnies of slanderers they should aim to confound them by the weight of their arguments, and not rail at them with bitter words, reproaches and maledictions."

The Council also declares: That when a controversy arises between Catholics honestly differing in opinion the same rule shall be observed. "For among men of good-will," it says, "Christian charity can well exist along with difference of opinion."

These injunctions are supported by an extract from the letter of the Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XIII., of August 3rd, 1881. It is as follows:

"In carrying on controversies care must be taken not to exceed the bounds of moderation which the rules of justice and charity prescribe; nor should persons who are devoted to the doctrines of the Church, and especially not those who in the Church are eminent in dignity and authority, be rashly accused, or otherwise brought under suspicion."

It is well for those of us who are editors or managers of Catholic newspapers to frequently and seriously ponder these declarations and injunctions. They are solemn and express declarations of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore following out and applying the instructions of the Sovereign Pontiff of the Church. They serve as guide posts to keep us in the right road, they are salutary instructions and warnings to keep us from injuring, in our mistaken earnestness and zeal, the holy cause we are striving to promote, they are tests by which all may measure and determine how closely each of the journals we are connected with approaches to, and how far it falls short of realizing, the ideal of a true Catholic journal; they serve as tests, too, by which true Catholic newspapers can be known and distinguished from pretended Catholic but in reality un-Catholic and anti-Catholic newspapers, and the real spirit and character of the latter be discovered, despite their false pretensions.

After dwelling at length upon points of editorial policy and management the paper conclude as follows;

But that Catholic newspapers may even approach the realization of what we have been urging, it is necessary that a support far greater than that which any of them now receive be accorded them. Until this is done, and it is not done