

CATHOLIC FAITH.

1. The existence of God is necessarily the foundation on which all Religion must rest. We know that this world must have had a Creator, infinitely powerful, intelligent, and wise. We must in him find the first cause, or author of all things; he must necessarily be self-existent. He must be eternal.

2. Whoever believes this much admits that which is obviously true, and yet manifestly above man's comprehension. He admits the existence of an eternal, self-existent, infinite, all powerful being, and yet no man can form an adequate notion of either of these attributes. In believing then the existence of God, man believes the plainest truth; and it we can be allowed the expression—the greatest religious mystery—viz. the existence of a being whose nature and the mode of whose existence are above his comprehension.—Thus,

3. Roman Catholics believe that to a reasonable mind no question ever can arise in religion concerning the nature and mode of any fact whose truth God reveals, and hence that in the examination of doctrines, we must confine ourselves to the examination of the evidences that God revealed them, and not to raise any difficulty on the ground that the nature of the doctrine is above the grasp of our comprehension. As in the natural world itself there are innumerable truths which are manifest to men of science and that yet are above the comprehension of the unlearned; so too there are innumerable others, which are plain to intellects of higher orders than the human, tho' they are beyond the reach of the most enlightened of our fellow men:—and surely the great Creator of men and heavenly beings of a higher order, sees and understands much that is above the comprehension of the most capacious created intellect.

4. Rom. Catholics believe also that this all wise and powerful God can in any manner he pleases reveal to some of his intelligent creatures the fact, that some things are true tho' above their comprehension, tho' he does not enable them fully to understand "how this can be," and and in such a case his word is to them sufficient evidence of the truth thereof. For instance, it is mysterious to man, or above his comprehension, that God can be eternal, yet when God assures him of that fact by his testimony, man—thus certified,—reasonably concludes that it must be true, and that he not only ought but is bound to believe it. In like manner, when God communicates to man the fact, that he has no material body, but is a spiritual being, the man has but an exceedingly vague notion of a spiritual nature, yet the assurance of God is to man a sufficient warrant for reasonably admitting this mysterious doctrine.

5. It is the belief of Catholics that the intelligent creature to whom God makes such a declaration is bound to believe its truth, and would be criminal in refusing to believe. For in the first place the creature is bound to act reasonably, and it would be unreasonable to refuse assent to any truth made manifest by evidence: but where the evidence is perfect, is as much as God—who is the witness—is clearly com-

potent to ascertain the truth of what he reveals, and it is impossible that the creature should doubt the integrity of the Creator. To doubt the competency of this witness would be gross absurdity: to doubt his integrity would be blasphemous folly—a wanton deliberate rejection of his testimony would therefore be unreasonable and irreligious.

6. Moreover, R. Catholics recognize in this witness the right and authority to demand the most unqualified assent of the creature, for he is the Creator who made us what we are, and from whom we received all that we have and to whom we owe the homage of all our powers. When he vouchsafes to reveal any thing to his creatures, it is not without the reasonable object of requiring its belief. In believing then what he declares, the creature pays to the Creator the homage of his two highest powers or faculties—that of the understanding and that of the will, and to refuse this would be highly criminal.

7. Rom. Catholics call this homage of belief—Faith: they look upon it to be most reasonable, most necessary, highly useful to the creature, rebounding to the honour of the Creator, the proper source of all religious knowledge, the most solid basis of morality, the best protection against superstition, the only ground of hope, the most appropriate foundation of charity.

8. Faith is then, according to Catholics, a divine virtue by which man believes all that God reveals: the motive of his belief is the authority God, and not the testimony of our own senses, nor our own reasoning, but we are induced to believe because we see that God is our witness, and we know that he cannot be deceived because of his omniscience, and that he cannot deceive because of his truth and sanctity.

9. R. Catholics do not admit of any distinction between truths revealed by God, so as to call some of them fundamental or necessary or of less importance to believe them than others which have been equally revealed by God, for his testimony is equally given for all, and his authority is equally great for each, and it would be equally a deviation from common sense and of sound religion to suppose the obligation of belief to be less respecting one than the other when both rest upon the same basis.

10. Moreover, whilst Catholics require for Faith a belief of all that God has revealed, and refuse to admit an exception against any one revealed truth, they do not socially admit a distinction between some revealed truths which they call principal, and others not principal: not that the first are to be believed to the exclusion of the others, or in preference to them, but because from their great importance they are the first rudiments of religious knowledge without a distinct acquaintance with which all the rest are unintelligible. Hence it is required that these principal mysteries should be explicitly known and distinctly believed—whilst in respect to many others, it is sufficient that there exists the determination to learn them as occasion shall require, or an opportunity present itself: and an im-

PLICIT belief in their truth, which involves a knowledge of the witness by whom they are to be testified, and an admission of the authority of this witness.

11. The belief of Faith is undoubting and free from the least fear of error, because it rests upon a motive of infallible certainty—the authority of God. God being a teacher who communicates to man a knowledge of truth, his communications are divine teaching, or doctrine: and in this, religious doctrine differs from opinion, which is a persuasion of the mind without certain knowledge, and in its most respectable form and highest grade is only founded on motives of great probability, but which do not exclude reasonable doubt and which always leave some fear of error.

12. The Faith of Catholics is then confined exclusively to doctrines—that is, truths revealed by God, and has no connexion with opinions, which are only the sentiments of individuals, or the notions of the judgments of men who are liable to error. Hence when we treat of Faith, we mean exclusively the belief of doctrine, and when we treat of doctrine, we mean solely and exclusively those truths which have been revealed by God.

13. The faith of Catholics does not embrace any portion of the sentiments of individuals, or bodies of men, be their station, or learning of piety what it may: nor does it embrace any of their judgments founded on reasoning drawn from premises of of the highest probability—nor does it embrace the notions of any created being or assembly.

14. The plain principle of Catholic Faith then is simply—the unhesitating belief of the testimony of God, and the most devoted submission to his divine authority. So far from "enslaving or debasing the human mind:" it enlightens the understanding, it corrects the judgment, elevates mind, enlarges the field of knowledge, and brings man to commune with his God and learn wisdom from his mouth.

The above remarks will, we trust, meet the views of our correspondent who signs himself—"A HEARER IN THE CATHEDRAL."—*Catholic Miscellany.*

Necessity of an Authoritative Tribunal.

The Judicial system of Georgia is peculiar. It consists of several judicaries: each of which is presided over by a single Judge, whose decisions are independent and final; and who holds office, not for life, or during competency, but for a term of years. Whatever may be the advantages of such an organization, its evils are many and manifest, and we can imagine only one, that having the semblance of a system would be more absurd—which would be, to constitute each man, a judge of the Law for himself. Gov. CRAWFORD in his recent Message (which possesses the merit of being both brief and well worded) has adverted to this matter in the following short and pithy paragraph.

"Experience has proved, that in the administrative justice of every people, uniformity of decision is an essential element. To suppose this result attainable under eleven judicatories, each having a judge in

dependent and final in his decisions, would be to suppose the exact similitude of so many minds: Nor is the difficulty removed by the suggestion that the rule prescribed is the same to each. In matters other than of temporal concerns, we have seen discordant & hostile opinions spring from a source eternal and "unchangeably the same." From the variety of the human mind, we may therefore expect upon most subjects constant conflicts of opinions, until there is constituted some authoritative standard to which they may be referred and conform'd."

Doubtless, the Governor alludes to the workings of the Protestant Rule of Faith; which gives to each reader, or hearer, of the Bible, the license of interpreting its meaning—and surpasses in proposterousness, the Judicial System of Georgia. The following propositions result as corollaries from that principle:

1. That God has established a Rule, which conducts, necessarily, to contradictory conclusions:
2. That His revelations cannot be learned with certainty.
3. That it is not important that they shall be.

The Catholic Church, alone possesses an authoritative, and (what of more consequence) an infallible "standard," to which "conflicts of opinion may be referred and conform'd"—*Jb.*

Protestant Confessions of Faith.

"Habits, and prejudices," says Monsieur Fernel, one of the pastors of Geneva, in a discourse, addressed lately to the consistency of that city,—“habits, and prejudices, will, no doubt, for a certain length of time, supply apologists for confessions of faith. It is, however impossible that, e.c long, men should not own that they are essentially repugnant to the spirit of the Reformation. Already has the church, which was the first to admit the Reformation in Switzerland,—that of Zurich,—that church so eminent for its piety—for above half a century past, suffered them to fall into disuse. Already have several other Protestant cantons thrown off the yoke. Already has the church of Barne greatly softened down the engagement, which once she required from the candidates to the ministry. Already, in several churches in Germany, the protestants consider confession of faith, as so many formulas, devoid of any consequence, which they are careless about observing; and which, if any where retained, are retained merely from a remnant of habit. Already have they left off presenting them to the pastors, in a great number of the churches in France. It is, therefore, I repeat it, impossible, that men should not, ere long, in all protestant countries, acknowledge the necessity of restoring to every Christian individual that liberty of examination, and that freedom of conscience, which belong to all; and the incontestible right of regulating their belief by nothing else but the word of the holy Scriptures."

In this country, the clergy still solemnly assert their acceptance of the 39 articles. Do they really believe in this singular code? It is, certainly, difficult to imagine how they can believe it, if it were only his plain reason, that it is impossible to understand it.