

INDIFFERENTISM.

Influence of Creed upon Conduct—Discourse by Mgr. Vaughan.

London Monitor.

The Right Rev. Mgr. Vaughan, preaching on Sunday at the Pro-Cathedral, Kensington, from the text, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism," said: "One of the commonest religious fallacies of the present day is that it is a matter of no great consequence what a man believes, provided only that he be sincere. How often one hears the exclamation: 'Oh! what difference can it make what a man's particular form of religion may be? If he be an honest and upright member of society, a loyal subject, a good father, and a faithful husband, then it can surely signify little whether he believes or disbelieves in transubstantiation or in baptismal regeneration, and the rest. I, for one, will think just as well of him, whether he pins his faith to the Pope of Rome or to the Archbishop of Canterbury, or indeed whether he prefers the more martial guidance of General Booth and his Salvation Army.' That such sentiments should be expressed at all is sufficiently strange, but that they should so often be well received, and even applauded, is surely more wonderful still. Such an attitude of mind is wholly unintelligible. It is equivalent to asserting that it does not matter two straws whether a man is believing the truth or whether he is accepting as truth a pack of lies and falsehoods. It is as though one should declare that truth is no better than falsehood, and fact no better than fiction, and that it matters not whether a man build his house on the rock or on the sand. Such a view ought to inspire the greatest horror and disgust, especially in an Englishman, who prides himself on his love of truth. But instead of becoming indignant at this

INDIFFERENCE TO TRUTH there is rather a tendency to be pleased and gratified. When these appalling sentiments are enunciated, the world expresses admiration, and calls them liberal. Those who listen will exclaim: 'O! what a quite too charming old gentleman. How extremely broad minded! How liberal! How very unsectarian and kind.' Yes, such is the silly and reprehensible attitude of the world. Believe what you like. Accept any falsehood. Provided you don't make yourself objectionable or interfere with our pleasure, you may profess any gospel you please. In what startling contrast to this stands out the teaching of St. Paul. He knows but one gospel, and bitterly does he denounce any who would pervert it, or tamper with it. Yes; he boldly warns his followers against the slightest defection from the straight path marked out for them. It is nothing to St. Paul who the new teacher may be, or how great, how learned, how wise. Even "though an angel from Heaven preach a gospel to you, other than that which we have preached to you, let him," exclaims the Apostle, "be anathema" (Gal. 1, 8), that is to say, let such a perverter of the truth be accursed. And no wonder, for Christ, Who came down from Heaven for the express purpose of teaching the truth, cannot be indifferent to its acceptance. "To this end have I been born," says Jesus Christ, "and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." The Catholic Church, because she breathes the spirit of Christ, and because she has been founded to bear witness to the truth, like her Divine Master, is as emphatic and as energetic as St. Paul in her denunciation and condemnation of any who will dare to teach another doctrine, or to propound any gospel other than that which has been committed to her keeping. She regards heresy as the greatest of sins, and, though she loves the heretic, especially if he be in good faith, she cannot but loathe, detest and execrate the heresy. Outside the Church, it is far otherwise. A man may embrace any false creed, and the world looks on, and smiles, and says it matters not what his creed is, so long as his conduct is satisfactory.

WHENCE ARISES THIS EXTRAORDINARY APATHY?

Why this utter disregard of the objective truth or falsehood of doctrines professed? Well, there are two explanations. The first is the Erastianism of the English Church; and the second is the multiplicity of the sects. A man may be ready enough to yield up his own personal views and judgments to a spiritual and divinely appointed authority; but he may distinctly object to surrender his judgment in this way to a purely human institution. Now the English Church is a State Church, and as essentially "a department of the State," so Macaulay informs us, "as the Court of Common Pleas." We are all aware that the highest offices in the English Church are in the hands of the laity. A layman nominates the Bishops, the Deans, and a large proportion of the incumbents, under the name of the Crown. The English Parliament, together with making laws for the sole power of making laws for this national Church. The clergy have nothing to do with them, except to obey them. They cannot alter one letter of the Prayer book, or introduce a single ceremony, without the previous permission of a lay sovereign, and the subsequent ratification of a lay Parliament. In the case of the Church's formularies, whether doctrinal or practical, the decision is entrusted to judges, in the first instance solely lay, and in no case exclusively or even preponderantly, clerical. Such a Church as this is hardly calculated to impress

anybody with a sense of divine authority. A Church like the English Church, whose only protection against errors is a human tribunal, viz., THE PRIVY COUNCIL UPON WHICH JEWS AND EVEN INFIDELS MAY SIT,

is scarcely a Church which strong-minded men with convictions of their own are likely to obey. Why, indeed, should they? Where there is no infallible authority, where there is but human reason at work, one man's mind and judgment are as good as those of another, and there will be as many opinions as there are men. This Erastianism, then, of the State Church is one of the primary causes of indifference in questions of doctrine, for no one will accept its decisions. The secondary cause is the fact that the number of religious bodies and communities has so enormously multiplied in this country since the Church of England became a department of the State. The rejection of Papal authority and the introduction of the Bible, privately interpreted, has so broken up and pulverized the English people into hundreds of sects that anything like unity in religion is despaired of. Every man differs from his neighbor; friend disagrees with friend; the son differs from the father; and father from son, upon all kinds of vital points. What is the consequence? Well, one can't be forever quarrelling with every one around one; there is a tacit consent to overlook differences of creed, and little by little men grow accustomed to this atmosphere, and end by concluding that definite belief is not a matter of any great moment, and that it signifies little what a person believes, or whether he believes anything. In this way one evil leads to another, and "Abyssus abyssum invocat." "Deep calls upon Deep" (Ps. xl 8). To sum up:—The reasons, then, that a man's creed is quite as important and necessary as his conduct are (1) because if God had made a revelation we are obliged to receive it in all its integrity (2) because we are strictly bound to surrender our reason to God by the exercise of faith as we are bound to surrender our will to Him by the exercise of obedience, and (3) because, even considered in itself, it cannot be a matter of indifference whether our intellect is made a storehouse of lies and fables and fancies or whether it is occupied by important and eternal verities, (4) because faith and conduct are, as a matter of fact, so intimately related that what affects the one will also affect the other. Yes! It is impossible to regard faith and conduct as two totally independent and disconnected things. They cannot be dissociated from one another, but are most closely related. So that if conduct be of importance; and vice versa, if it does not matter what particular truths a man believes, then it cannot matter either what particular acts he performs, or what his conduct may be.

CREED AND CONDUCT.

Persons who calmly assure us that "conduct but not creed is of importance," do not realize the import of the words they use, for creed determines conduct. A man is not a machine; he is not like a steam-engine to be moved by valves and pistons; no, he acts according to his faith and belief. If he holds certain things as true he will act in one way, if he holds them as false he will act in another. This is clearly seen, even in the most ordinary and the most trivial affairs of life. If a person offers you a ring or a bracelet, sparkling with precious stones, for a certain price you will act in one way if you believe the stones to be genuine, and in quite another if you believe them to be mere paste, manufactured to be more costly. When a certain person, some years ago, tried to pass himself off as Sir Roger Tichborne, all Sir Roger's old friends were divided into two camps; those who believed him to be what he professed to be, acted in one way, those who believed him to be an impostor acted in a totally different manner. Thus, throughout life, in great things and in small we act according to our beliefs. To change a man's creed is to change his acts, his conduct, and the whole tenor of his life. It is like placing your hand on the rudder of a ship; the least little pressure will affect the motion and direction of the whole vessel. What would we think of one who should teach that provided the ship keeps on its proper course it does not matter how the rudder may be interfered with? Why, it can't keep on its course, unless the rudder be properly directed. Yet, this is exactly how those persons reason who tell us that it matters nothing what a man believes, provided only he leads a good life, and is sober and industrious. Now, what is true in the natural order, is true in the supernatural. Take, as an instance, the punishment of sin. Two men, we will suppose, are tempted to commit some secret crime. A sin of theft, or of gluttony, or of impurity. Perhaps it is but a sin of thought. One is about to indulge his passion, but his faith tells him that God is indeed present before him; that He is an actual witness of the struggle; that He will reward him, if he resists, and will punish him if he basely yields to the tempter. This belief supplies him with the very strongest arguments against yielding to his evil inclination. He is just about to put the cup of pleasure to his lips, when his hand is, as it were, arrested by the thought of the Crucified, sacrificing his life for love of him; he is on the point of yielding to self-indulgence, when his imagination carries him down to that eternal prison house, with its quenchless fires, where the breakers of God's laws are confined for all eternity. And he asks himself the question, is it worth my while to purchase the

pleasure of a moment at the price of endless torment? And so he pauses and reins up on the brink of sin. It is his faith that has wrought the change. His faith in God's love; in God's punishment of sin, and in the doctrine of hell, determine his conduct, and keeps him on the path of duty. Remove the faith and you remove the motive, and what is there to stay him? He falls an easy prey to his passions. THE MAN WITHOUT FAITH PERISHES IN THE DAY OF TEMPTATION.

Though some dogmas will affect one's life and conduct more than others, yet surely dogma will exercise some influence. Let me select a somewhat different one for illustration, viz., the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist. Is it a matter of little importance whether a man accepts or rejects it? One who does not believe may pass a long life sixty, seventy, or eighty years within a stone's throw of the Blessed Sacrament, and never be conscious that Jesus Christ, in His human as well as His divine nature, is so near. And because he does not believe, he does not receive; and because he does not receive, he is deprived of all the special graces of Holy Communion. No amount of sincerity, and what we call "good faith," on the part of the Protestant, can make up for the loss. There is no greater privilege on earth than the privilege of receiving into our heart of hearts the uncreated Eternal Son of God; a union such as that is unspeakable, and can never be fully estimated till our minds are illuminated and strengthened in another world. Yet without faith such a union is never even sought. Nor is this the only loss. For consider how such a dogma stirs up within our hearts the love of God. A man who has no faith in the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament may indeed love God, but how much deeper and stronger that love would be did he believe that God so loves and cherishes His poor creature as to come down upon our altars, and abide with us forever. The charity, the condescension, the infinite pity displayed in this dogma, is one of the most powerful incentives to love. Even a single doctrine such as this, must and does influence one's whole life. A person who believes, and one who does not believe in it, are like two wholly different persons; they live in a different world, they have different conceptions of God's love, and can never look upon religion in quite the same light. No. Beware of all unreasonable doctrines. And remember that if a man's general conduct is a matter of importance, then must his creed be of importance too, since creed influences conduct, and, to a very large extent, determines a person's behavior and mode of life.

LIES REFUTED.

Slander often makes the truth more evident, by evoking a superabundance of testimony to disprove the slanderer's falsehoods. When the sainted Father Damien died in his heroic isolation among the lepers of Molokai, there were not wanting malicious tongues to smirch his character with false imputations; but these only served to elicit tributes to his holy life and labors that might not otherwise have been pronounced.

So it has happened, as it was to have been expected, in the trumped-up charges against the religious orders in the Philippine Islands. No fabrication has been too gross to be directed against them on the part of the anti-Catholic press. The enemies of Catholicity have been given free scope in the columns of rabid sectarian papers, and their charges against the Philippine orders have been reiterated in some of the secular dailies with little or no attempt at independent investigation of the accusation made in wholesale fashion.

The defence of the friars, however, who were too remote from their *ex parte* accusers to defend themselves—a fact of which full advantage was taken by the purveyors of lies—has been ably and convincingly made. Not only have disinterested current writers, Catholic and non-Catholic, who are cognizant of the exact state of things in the Philippines to day, given in the lie direct to the traducers of the religious orders there, but there is to be found in the books of unprejudiced travellers and students of the historical development of those islands, testimony without stint to the learning, labors, sacrifices and virtues of the monastic guardians of the religious welfare of the islanders.

In the September number of the Messenger of the Sacred Heart appears the latest tribute to the missionary zeal, and to the valuable scientific researches of the orders in the Philippine archipelago. It reviews the history of the islands from their discovery to the present day, and presents an estimate of the work of the monks and its results, which is an effectual reply, backed up as it is by figures and the attestations of acknowledged authorities, to the diatribes of anti-Catholic scribblers.

Six years ago, according to the Messenger, there were more than six millions of Catholics in the islands, out of a total population of seven millions, and of these six millions, about five millions were parishioners of the various religious orders, and mostly converts or descendants of converts from paganism or Mohammedism, and other forms of false religion. The labor of caring for these vast numbers under the conditions of life in the islands would seem to be exhaustive enough to absorb all the energies of the religious, yet according to Prof. Ferdinand Blumentritt, whom the article quotes, and who has devoted himself in a particular manner to the study of the

islands and their inhabitants: "The Catholic missionaries display great activity, not only for the propagation of Christianity and its civilization, but also for the geographical and ethnographical exploration of this archipelago."

Another well-known authority quoted, M. E. Reclus, author of the "Geographie Universelle," has stated from his own research that the people of the Philippines are ardent Catholics, and among the most civilized of the far East, adding that they are among the happiest people on earth. The witness of such men as these disposes of the tissue of slander devised by the enemies of the Church, who are always seeking new pastures of scandal to brood in. To these names the writer adds that of the Protestant American Minister to Siem, Mr. Barrett, who has said of the priests of Manila that "their efforts to preserve order are so respected that lawlessness is seldom displayed within the spheres of their influence. Numbering nearly three thousand, they include many men of great ability, noble character and wide knowledge"; and also that of another Protestant, Mr. W. B. Palgrave, who, writing in the Scientific American Supplement of the effect of the teaching of the Philippine priests, has said from his own observation: "As a social bond, a humanizing influence, an effective sanction, a promoter of friendly intercourse, of right, of love even; a balm—ideal, but not inefficacious—for the wounds and bruises of racism, Christianity has, it would seem, rarely been more advantageous to its followers than here."

It is a well-known method of those who attack the Church and her ministers to hold her and them responsible for any abuse that may arise among her followers, even though that abuse springs from a downright violation of the Church's inner principles and expressed teaching. This method is as absurd as it is unjust, but it originated early in the history of attacks upon the Church, and will be followed without doubt to the end of time. It is fortunate that it can be refuted as often as it is by the words of many outside the pale, who, having no axe to grind or religious grudge to foster, bear genuine testimony, as these gentlemen do, to her work and the labors of her priests for the souls of men.—Boston Pilot.

Weak Lungs.

Emaciation, weakness, and that fatal disposition to take cold easily, thus adding little by little to the strain upon the already overburdened body. How many afflicted are trusting to cough mixtures, mustard and poultices for safety? Fatal error. Not by these, but by adding to the nutritive power of the body and the increased strength and vitality which increased nutrition affords, can you hope to obtain relief. Maltine with Cod Liver Oil combines the excellencies of a medicine, a food, and a digestive agency of unexampled power. The full remedial value of the cod liver oil, rendered palatable and of easy digestion, is combined with the nutritive values of wheat, oats and barley. This in itself would render Maltine and Cod Liver Oil of greater value than any emulsion. But it possesses a further quality of inestimable value in its property of increasing the solubility of fat forming, heat producing, starchy foods, just the elements required for the rebuilding of the emaciated. This you may easily demonstrate by a short trial of this unrivalled preparation.

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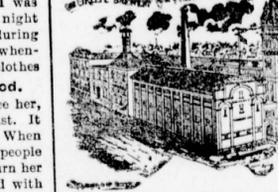
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