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"Christianus mihi nomen est, Catholicus vero Cognomen."—St. Pacian, 4th Century.

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MODERN AGNOSTICISM.

[From a pastoral letter to the clergy and laity by Archbishop O'Brien, of Halifax.]

It is sometimes by reason of the unsearchableness of God's ways that faith in a soul tried by the disappointments of life may, through impatience at not knowing the reasons of these trials, grow weak and lapse into doubt and error; and that many who have not the gift of faith—thinking there should be no mystery hidden from them, refuse to accept the revelation of Christ. Not only that, but they deny the existence of a supernatural order, and seek to bring down the human soul and its noble faculties to the level of mere material things. With a wearisome iteration of obscure and words that express old-time ideas in polysyllabic and recent adaptation, they succeed in making themselves believe that they are profoundly learned; and if they can only copy a sentence from some German writer they impress on a certain number of the public a similar belief. It is disheartening to see how easily the average man outside the fold is misled by every catch-phrase, and how eagerly he pins his faith to novel theories, provided only they are not Catholic. A man who may have acquired distinction in some one branch of physical science endeavors to explain all facts and phenomena of creation by the laws of that one branch. A moment's reflection should teach us that he can no more succeed in this than could an ape in constructing and operating a steam engine. Yet, by a dexterous use of the magic word "evolution," or that other one of which dabblers in science are so fond, viz., "environment," with the addition of some happy expression, he is able to make the intelligence of fairly intelligent men, and they join with him in doubting or denying the existence of God; or they seek to null their conscience to rest by adopting the creed of agnosticism, or, in other words, that God's existence can neither be proved nor disproved. This is the fashionable form of unbelief at present. Its professors hope to escape the reproach of atheism, as well as the stigma of vulgar materialism. But they insult God by practically denying with the atheist His existence; and they degrade reason with the materialist, not by making it a function of matter, but by making it the champion of the very capabilities. And yet these are the very men who pose as the champions of truth, while in truth they are its assassins.

This error of agnosticism, although new in name, is very old in reality. It may come like a revelation to some that it is old and vulgar, and altogether unreasonable. It was quite widespread in the days when St. Paul wrote to the Romans. Then, as now, its professors considered themselves to be wise, they became fools; then, as now, "God gave them up to the desires of their heart, to uncleanness, to dishonor their own bodies among themselves;" then, as now, they changed the "truth of God" into a lie, and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator." (Rom. i, 22). Did their airs of superior wisdom impress St. Paul? Did he fear their laughter or their wrath, and deny God's truth, or only profess it with bated breath and with an air of apology? Far from it: like the Catholic Church of today he boldly proclaimed: "For I am not ashamed to confess the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." (Rom. i, 16). Nor did he fear to announce that the "wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all impiety and injustice of those men that detain the truth of God in injustice." (Rom. i, 18).

Nor was he satisfied with proclaiming the faith that had been revealed: like the Catholic Church he was the champion of human reason and upheld the dignity of its power. He met the agnostics of that day on their own ground, and pointed out how they could learn to know God through His works. He says: "For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that have been made, His eternal power also and divinity; so that they are inexcusable." (Rom. i, 20). Therefore, the supernatural and unseen order can be known by man with invincible certainty. The visible things of creation—the trees, flowers, birds of the air, the running waters instinct with myriad life—are so many books in which the mind of men may read the existence of their invisible Creator. Human reason can prove with absolute certainty that a supreme and final cause, endowed with intelligence and free will, actually exists. It is no "working hypothesis;" no mere scientific assumption introduced for reasoning out to a desired end; it is no theory more or less probable; it is no postulate even; it is a fact which can be demonstrated with the severest mathematical precision. This is why the Apostle pronounced the agnostics of his day "inexcusable." What shall we say of those of our age? Their advantages are as sunlight to the glow-worm's lamp when compared with those enjoyed by men whom St. Paul held to be "inexcusable." They have eighteen centuries of Christian enlightenment; they have vast storehouses of philosophic knowledge in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, and a sufficiency in any of the innumerable hand books of Catholic philosophy in use in our colleges. Perhaps from prejudice, or pride of intellect, or from oversight, they may have neglected these; yet were they to reason calmly, with a desire to know the truth, from effect to cause, they could deduce, with all the rigor of a demonstration in Euclid, from the existence of a simple principle the existence of an omnipotent Creator. There must

be a cause for the existence of that principle; and though we may go back through a long chain of intermediate causes, working through ages and eons, back before the formation of the earliest geological stratum, back to the vapor period of our sphere, back to the first plasma, or elementary matter, we must, as an absolute necessity of logical induction, eventually come to a first cause, the fountain and source of all things, intermediate ones. To deny this is to deny one's reason; and this is precisely what those wide-mouthed professors who are opposed to Christianity are continually doing; and yet they are applauded and quoted as authorities by professing Christians.

In our reasoning from effect to cause there is no assumption, no "working hypothesis;" no begging the question and no obscurity of language to confuse and mislead. All is clothed with the invincible certainty of the logic of causality. When we see human footprints in the snow we are certain some one has passed by; we see such marks clearly, however, than we note God's footprints in visible creation. Thus by the "things that are made," we clearly understand God's "eternal power and divinity;" and we recognize this natural and visible order as a veil which hides from our mortal view the beauty and glory but not the power and action of the supernatural.

Sound principles of philosophy must prevail and reason's noble attributes must be recognized if we would spread the truth of Christ. Men must have reason before they can have faith in act. The modern unbeliever, as a rule, degrades reason and denies its capabilities; there is, therefore, no basis for faith in his soul. Those who have inherited the faith less in proportion to the misuse they make of their reason. It is the story, "esteeming themselves to be wise they became fools." They would not read Catholic books nor listen to instruction; they were above all that! Not having been grounded in the first principles of true philosophy they undertook to discuss its most knotty questions; they read the glib but superficial articles in current literature, in which style appears to make up for absence of ideas and connection of thought, and imbued with its fallacies, and neglecting their religious duties, but easily fell under the tempter's sway. Having abused and in part denied their reason, faith was sapped, and soon destroyed. This is the genesis and the abridged history of the fall from the faith of some young men in our day.

Our duty, dearly beloved brethren of the clergy, is plain. In the confession of shifting creeds and loud-mouthed denials of the supernatural, we must, like St. Paul, uphold the dignity of human reason, the oneness of the revealed truth, and the evidence of God's action in the universe. Take occasion from time to time to give short and plain instructions on these subjects, using, like the Apostle, both the consciousness of reason, as shown in our philosophies, and the teachings of Divine faith. Never weary of setting forth a fact too often overlooked, viz., that only in the Catholic system can the operations of right reason and the truths of revelation be harmonized and made mutually helpful. Not being "ashamed of the Gospel," knowing it to be the "power of God unto salvation," and being assured of the unchanging nature of its message, the Catholic Church fears no truth of science, no development of knowledge, no results of investigations in the depths of the sea, or in the bowels of the earth, or in the stary firmament above. Whatever of truth human research may bring to light can only add fresh evidence to the faithfulness of the testimony she has so long borne to God's unchanging word.

Long centuries ago, in what the ignorant call the "dark ages," the proclamation in a general council that "truth cannot contradict truth" and she imposed on the teachers of philosophy the duty of proving from human reason the existence of God, and the simplicity and spirituality of the soul; adding that these can be known by the light of reason. As truth, then, can never be opposed to truth, it follows that no discovery in any branch of knowledge can be opposed to, or can injure by one jot or tittle, any other truth whatsoever, whether natural or supernatural. The reason of all truth, both revealed and naturally acquired, is in God, the source and cause of all being and all reality. Hence, whilst by His revealed word He may and does teach us higher and more profound truths than His touches by the intelligence through the book of nature, still, when rightly understood, they can be by no possibility involve a contradiction. Scientists from time to time are obliged to recast their views and to abandon their pet theories. The gelatinous mud from the depths of the ocean, called Bathybius, and thought by Huxley to be of organic origin, has been shown to be the outcome of chemical action; and the explosion of Darwin's elaborate theory on coral formation, which, like Bathybius, it was proclaimed would shatter Christendom and shiver the Bible into atoms, are instances in point. We learn from them to be cautious in admitting novel conclusions, and to smile at the vain attempts so often made to oppose the truth of the Gospel. Should St. Paul, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel different from that which we have received, we would cry, "let him be anathema!" (Gal., i, 8). This is our security and the insurmountable barrier to unbelief. In this we have to fight single handedly; for any man, or body of men, who admit the possibility of a change or revision in the smallest article of revealed truth, much though they protest or deny, open the door to agnosticism. We ask in all charity and good will, where, outside the Catholic Church, is the power to say and conquer modern unbelief? All, except she admit the fatal weakness of not being absolutely certain of the truth of their teachings. Would that men of good will might think seriously

on this, and strive to understand the nature of the citadel of truth—the Catholic Church—"One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all;" his motto for the supernatural order; and "truth cannot contradict truth," her device for the natural. With these authorities expounded she is impregnable against all assaults of unbelief.

THE BISHOPS AND PARNELL.

SIGNIFICANT PASTORALS.

In their Lenten pastorals nearly all the Bishops in Ireland refer to the painful controversy over the national leadership. Bishop Gilhooley, of Elphin, says: "The present calamitous condition of our beloved country, as regards political matters, requires of me to give you a few words of advice as to your moral and religious duty in this crisis. You are aware that the Bishops of Ireland, myself amongst the number, have fully and anxiously considered the duty of the Catholic hierarchy in reference to the leadership of Ireland in the present Parliament. They declare that they consider the late leader utterly disqualified, not by his non-Catholic creed, whatever that may be, but by the scandalous disclosures of his infamous life, to continue to lead a Christian and Catholic people, that Catholic Ireland cannot trust, respect, or obey him. His political acumen is not denied, but it cannot be viewed separately from his loathsome immorality; and even if it could, he should, on political as well as religious grounds, forfeit every claim to the continued respect and confidence of our people. The Liberals of Great Britain repudiate his leadership, the Bishops of Ireland can have no contact in politics with him or with those who continue to uphold and justify him; his own barefaced persistence in clinging to the leadership in spite of such repudiation, should itself prove to any thoughtful man that he is thoroughly reckless of the interests of our country, and influenced only by an insense ambition to defy and surmount opposition.

Bishop Donnelly of Clogher, says: "You have seen our Parliamentary Party disrupted, our National organization broken up, scenes of deplorable violence enacted, and our country made a spectacle to the world around us; and all this through the agency of a man who, for ever acknowledged, has fallen into shameful crimes, and who, instead of retiring, even for a time, from the gaze of the world, has come forth brazen-facedly, from the Divorce Court and all its scandalous disclosures, including that he shall still be recognized as the leader of the Irish nation. You have seen this man disregarding the voice of two-thirds of his Parliamentary colleagues, including the most stainless self-sacrificing, and treated of our public men—you have seen him, in his mad career, committing acts of the most lawless violence, calling to his aid the elements of disorder and revolution, and earning for himself the applause and support of our utmost enemies, whether intentionally or not, to alienate from us the sympathy of those without whose aid we could never expect the attainment of our National hopes. Is this thing to go further on? Shall we allow that organization which has been built up by years of toil and suffering, by the tears and prayers and unshaken sacrifices of the Irish people, to be shattered by the frantic ambition of this unhappy man, and our Catholic nation, famed for the purity of its people, to be ranged under the leadership of a notorious adulterer, whose crime has been aggravated by all its shameful surroundings? Shall we suffer the fruits of our civilization, so near their fulfillment, to be thus utterly dissipated? Assuredly we shall not, if we can prevent it."

The Bishop of Galway says: "Terrible is the responsibility of any man or set of men whose utterances are calculated to poison the minds of our Catholic people with ungodly principles and to undermine the foundations of faith in the Catholic country. In working out the political problem of our unhappy country we are called upon to still accept as the Moses of our race a man steeped to the lips in moral turpitude. And if our people are expected to close their eyes upon the moral record of their Moses, it may soon come to pass that they shall be told that they must not be guided by the light of the moral law, but by the light of the 'abyss invokes abyss' in the headlong course of godless politics (Ps. xli). Against such reversal of the traditions of our Catholic country we must not cease to protest."

The Primate, Archbishop Logue of Armagh, deals with the subject at great length. Among other things he says: "It is painful, above all, to be obliged to condemn the conduct of a gentleman whom, in common with the great body of my countrymen, I admired and trusted—yes, trusted to such a degree that, till the fact was forced on me by evidence I could no longer resist, I refused to believe that he had been guilty of the detestable act of holding in his hands the destinies of a nation, he could batter them away for a shameful intrigue. Talk of fidelity to the country, of never having proved false to Ireland, with such a fact staring us in the face.

"Are we, Irishmen, then expected to sacrifice our sense of decency, to tarshah almost the only little gem that has been spotted to us? And what are we to gain by the sacrifice? We are to gain blighted hopes, the ruin of our cause, the old curses of our race, disease on a desecrated tomb, which shall be permanent, all compromise to the contrary notwithstanding. I think I have a right to speak for myself—I believe I can speak with confidence for the clergy of the archdiocese, and for the laity too, who very few exceptions. Speaking in their name and my own, I pledge myself, on my own and their behalf, that we shall never follow a banner which we are ashamed to unfurl, lest the nations should

point to the dark stain on its folds. What I say I have no doubt others in my position will also say. I am confident I do not stand alone.

MORLEY SCORES BALFOUR.

A FIELD-NIGHT IN THE COMMONS.

BALFOUR SNEAKS BEHIND T. W. RUSSELL.

London, February 20. Judging by the manner in which it opened, this week had fair to be a stirring one in the House of Commons, for, according to the predictions of the various "organs," there was lots of work cut out in advance, and the champions on both sides were to lead the political cohorts. Morley's motion of censure on the Irish Executive for their action in the Tipperary prosecutions had been fixed for discussion on Monday evening; and this, it was assumed, would be the first gun of a big battle; for every one recognizes that, under the present Tory rule, Balfour is the Irish Executive; and the Tory papers, which never tire of beslaughtering him with adulation, had given out that he had made elaborate preparations to sack up his Irish proceedings on Monday evening; and that, it was assumed, would be the first gun of a big battle; for every one recognizes that, under the present Tory rule, Balfour is the Irish Executive; and the Tory papers, which never tire of beslaughtering him with adulation, had given out that he had made elaborate preparations to sack up his Irish proceedings on Monday evening; and that, it was assumed, would be the first gun of a big battle; for every one recognizes that, under the present Tory rule, Balfour is the Irish Executive; and the Tory papers, which never tire of beslaughtering him with adulation, had given out that he had made elaborate preparations to sack up his Irish proceedings on Monday evening; 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