

## CRITICS OF A MODERNIST BOOK.

BY THE EDITOR.

THERE is a great difference between Catholicism and Romanism. We have a Greek Catholic church, we have a Roman Catholic church, we have an Anglican Catholic church, and every Protestant church claims to be an exponent of the true Catholic church which is or should be the communion of all faithful Christians.

Protestantism is commonly regarded as a great progress in history, and there is no question that it marks a new epoch in the development of mankind. The intellectual horizon is widened by discovery and invention, and a future of still greater promise is prepared which we may call the age of science. Nevertheless there are some features in the Catholic church which speak in its favor, and this is true especially so far as art and the glamor of ritual are concerned. We deem it a pity that the reformation has swept away so many beautiful customs out of the churches and has left the religious life prosaic and monotonous. This is true mostly of the Puritans whose house of worship is ostentatiously unattractive and compares very unfavorably with the Roman Catholic churches.

The American traveler through Europe is strongly advised to visit Roman Catholic churches, for none of them so poor or small but contains something of interest,—the picture of a great artist, a marble statue, stained glass windows, or some rare monument or historic relic. Protestants may criticize this very feature as foreign to religion proper, nevertheless these things possess a peculiar charm and reflect the heart of the people to whom the church belongs.

Catholic churches are open all day during the week and on Sunday. They are for the people, and people flock there. The humble worshiper sits in a corner to find respite amid the stress of life, and even the horrible sights of people stricken with disease are evidence that the lowliest are not refused. There is something

human and humane about it and it certainly serves certain needs of all, even of the downtrodden, for which the Protestant churches have little consideration.

Even the most artistic Protestant churches are cold and forbidding in comparison to Roman Catholic sanctuaries. It may be true that in Protestant countries there is less need to care for people of this kind, for there is less poverty in the United States, England and Germany than in Spain and Italy, and the sick are taken to hospitals, but Protestants might bear in mind that their religious life is cold when compared to Roman Catholicism, which is more sympathetic with the lower strata of human society.

Catholicism is an ideal. A church that claims to be Catholic welcomes people of all nations and the very claim of Catholicity in a church is a promise that its doctrines shall be universal truths and also that nationality shall be of no consequence and shall play no part in its administration or policy.

That the Roman Catholic church is not universal but that it is Italian, is a well-known fact which even the most faithful Catholics do not deny. Care is taken that an overwhelming number of cardinals shall be Italians, and the chances of having any other than an Italian as Pope is extremely small. In itself this would be of little importance, but it is an indication that the entire church government is in the hands of a clique which is first of all bent on perpetuating its privileges.

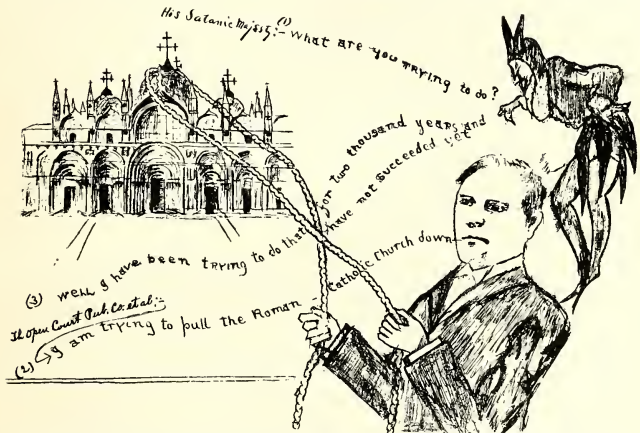
We must therefore distinguish between the Catholic faith as a religion and the Romanism of the Roman Catholic church, the latter at the present time the dominating spirit in its government. There is no contradiction therefore in the statement that we may be sympathizers with the Catholic faith while we criticise the Romanism of the Roman Catholic church.

The Catholic faith contains much that is beautiful. The ceremonial is more artistic than Protestant worship, with the possible exception of Episcopalianism, which however does not attain the same mystic glamour to be found in the mass at St. Peters or other great Roman Catholic cathedrals. The mind of the scientist is not made to indulge in the intoxicating enjoyment of this form of worship, but scientists are not the only people in the world that count, and we can very well understand that there are many minds who are in need of the poetry, the grandeur and solemn symbolism of a worship such as is found in Catholicism.

With all our appreciation of the significance of such forms of worship, we are aware of great shortcomings in the Roman Catholic

church and so far as we can see, all of them are due to the political management of the church which in one word we have called Romanism. If the church could be reformed so as to keep in check the spirit of Romanism, the Catholic church could be one of the grandest institutions recorded in history, and there would be no need of its being a brake on the wheel of progress, a menace to liberty and a bane to science.

From this point of view the Open Court Publishing Company accepted for publication the book of "A Modernist," entitled *Letters to His Holiness, Pope Pius X*, and we will repeat here that we regard this book as an eye-opener to Catholics. We hope that in the long run it will produce good effects. That our good intentions would be misinterpreted was to be foreseen, but upon the whole we



feel gratified that recent public events as well as the individual responses we have received justify our action. Even condemnatory letters which have been written to us by Roman Catholic priests to whom circulars were sent, are, in our opinion, strong evidence of the need of a reform within the pale of the Roman Catholic church. We propose to publish a selection from them for the purpose of characterizing the situation. Most of these letters are signed by full names, and others not signed can be traced to their authors through the postmarks, but we deem it proper not to make them public. Wherever they are anonymous the fact will be stated.

The letters which use strong language are in the majority and naturally they are the most amusing. We open the series with

a pretty picture which brings out the artistic spirit that still animates the church. In the original, the anonymous artist drew Satan in red ink standing above the shoulder of the infidel representing the Open Court Publishing Company. The words issuing from his mouth are also in red, while the crosses on the spires of the church are in gold. Accompanying is the following text:

"The Church laughs, because fools like you always existed, and because Christ has said to His Church: Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world. It would be well for you poor fools to read Matt. x. 16-42 and Matt. xviii. 19, 20, and see by the first how you and your ilk are exemplifying, consciously or unconsciously, the words of Christ. Why did you not give the name of the author? He is either some fellow who does not know what he is talking about, or else he is some poor unfortunate, who through his love for "Punch" or "Judy" caused him to fall from grace, and he is working the gullible unchristian fools like yourself. I say unchristian, for Protestantism has passed away with not a shred of the original Christianity that characterized it. Poor fellows!"

A Jesuit from a northwestern state was thus affected:

"Now I want to tell you the impression made on me by it all. Have you ever conversed with a maniac? If you have, recollect the pity you ought to have felt for the poor fellow; and your utter disgust at his wild, incoherent and absolutely laughable statements. Now that is just how I felt after I had perused those pages."

A Texas priest finds in the *Letters of a Modernist*, "the voice of nobody saying nothing," but betrays his own incredulity as to established facts by continuing: "If the *Open Court* thinks that any intelligent American is green and gullible enough to think that any priest is so ignorant and stupid as to be the author of some of the things set down in the book they must be living in a fools' paradise. Most of it we have heard before. Some of it is true but that is part of the game, nevertheless it does not justify the charge of \$1.25 for such a stupendous fraud. The book is returned under different cover. Hope some of its authors will go to Lourdes."

A Spanish priest writes these simple words: "*Modernista otro Respiradero del Infierno.*"

A Dominican father writes: "Pray give me the author's name, a short sketch of his life, a properly endorsed certificate of his intellectual, moral and religious standing, and I will immediately order a number of copies. If not, I will denounce Author and Publisher as Liars and Humbugs, and your work as one of *shameless falsehood* and of *portentous deviltry.*"

An adherent of the old school is sweeping in his condemnation of modernism. He writes: "To let you know that you need no more molest me with your heretical literature, I inform you that I consider every Modernist an enemy of God and the first born of the devil."

We regret to have shocked a pious priest who sees in us the incarnation of the Evil One. He says:

"It is a shocking publication and as false as if it came from Hell and Satan was its author. Why publish such a fabrication? In God's name quit doing the Devil's work. 'Letters to His Holiness, Pope Pius X!' 'Springs to Catch woodcocks' as Shakspeare would say. You may as well save your wind as address a letter to His Holiness. Throwing stones at the moon is more practical. You will make no money on the business and evidently this is the object in view. Of course there are fools who swallow your silly stuff, but prey not on them like—."

One of our anonymous correspondents promises that sometime in the future we shall pay dearly for our "rebellious spirit of pride." Another speaking in the name of common sense claims that priests know more about "Biblical criticism, comparative religion, history of dogma, the Church's relation to social progress" than heretics. He adds: "You must think us ignoramuses. It would pay you gentlemen to learn something about our seminary courses and also to make the acquaintance of some of our priests. They will talk to you. You will see how ignorant they are."

The Superior of a Catholic Hospital believes also in the high educational mission of the Catholic church and writes as follows with reference to a corresponding article which appeared in the *May Open Court*:

"In face of the fact that the Catholic church, through the Popes, has been the founder of all the great Universities of Europe,—Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Paris, Salamanca, etc., etc., etc.; that she is running more institutions of learning, Academies, Univ. Schools, at the present day, than all other 'churches' combined; that she has been the patron of more fine art, sculpture, painting and literature, than all the world besides, that her literature has been the inspiration of all the greatest geniuses of Christianity, Columbus, Aquinas, Dante, Mozart, Shakespeare, Milton, Longfellow (whose finest veins are all Catholic), that she gave, at the cost of the blood of her sons and daughters, Christianity and civilization to all the nations of Europe, England, Germany, Russia, France, etc., etc., that her sons and daughters are now distributed by the ten thousand

through heathen lands, China, Japan, India, Jungled Africa, Tropical Islands, Leper Colonies, etc., etc., schooling and christianizing degraded tribes,—in the face of these facts I had thought that such a stupid and brazen article as 'Modernism in America' would not be tolerated in any respectable magazine, this late in the 20th century. Shall logic force me to exclude your publication from that category?"

Simple and to the point is this answer written without signature across the inside of the circular,

which the protestatory course seems silent. And it is possible that you will find in it, too, an answer of the questionings and questionings of your own hearts. Every reform pretenses and every abuse in the Roman Catholic Church? Let the answer come from within the Church itself. When priests walk together confidently to the altar complain of tyrants? Do they never criticize the Latin hierarchy which rules? Do they never voice their resentment against a scolarly education which leaves them ignorant of the chief problems which are solving the modern world? Do they arising from biblical criticism, comparative history of dogma, and Church's relation to social progress? Do they never confide to one another personally is crushed, the free development of intellect obstructed and the opinion of their hearts persecuted? Do they never wish a plain regret for having, when unyouthful boys, taken a mindless vow? Do they never speak with disgust of superstition which means officially sanctioned, they must vote and pretend to believe? Do they never voice their uneasiness at seeing the Church's best scholars condemned, and every effort made to keep priests in ignorance of the progress of critical studies? Do you know that in their confidences—press, to speak of other things. Therefore abuses exist; and Modernism is nothing more than a manfully recognizing them.

*Antichrist*

*Devilish*

It is a patent injustice to beguile a boy into a perpetual vow and afterwards mock at his pines agony when he finds that he should never have taken it. It says that self-respecting scholarship must exist under the present representation of Index,quisition, and violence committees. Modernism finds on the facts of ecclesialship and declining to twist facts to fit theology tries to adapt theology to fit the facts (formerly theology was adapted to Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy). (This Modernism which has already won the choicest mind of Catholicism. Should you not know it? Perhaps there are abuses now which justify Modernism. A thousand voices are saying so at all events. Shall we not heed them to the extent at least of patiently examining grounds the primary injustice letter?"

PUBLISHER'S NOTE  
These letters are not intended to create a temptation, but to prepare a future which a momentary of enthusiasm seems me in hand. The first a two-fold purpose. On the one hand our author wants to make the Curia feel its enormous responsibility, as upon the other hand, to educate both priest and layman for the work of reconstruction. Should the Roman Catholic church not conform to the demands of the time, should the Curia continue to prevent a fitting response so much needed, it is quite possible that many reforms will be forced upon Rome from a genuine Catholic church will originate.  
The present Catholic Church is not Catholicism as Italian and even Roman. Its first and people is that of an Italian can be changed in order to keep the balance of power in Italy. Will the time ever come when the Roman Catholic church will develop the epistle "some of us will be sure of a Catholic church, which Roman Catholics, English and Germans are on a parity?" THE PUBLISHER.

*Antichrist*  
*you*  
*never damned*  
*Judas!*

*Vade retro, Satana, - ne suade mihi vana*

It agrees well with the following also written anonymously on a circular:

"Did the writer of the book learn the contents of it in Hell or slum? ? ? Who would believe Antichrist."



Still another is even more forceful simply because it is condensed.

\_\_\_\_\_ for \$1.25.  
*To hell . -*  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_  
*with*  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
*Law*

Many good priests are more Roman than Catholic and they betray their spirit by an outspoken hostility to Protestantism. A representative of this class writes: "Protestant *ministers* and all other *fakers* are the only ones interested in modernism." He adds: "Modernism has been condemned as far as Catholics are concerned." The same sentiment is expressed almost literally in other letters.

More dignified is the following letter from a priest who is apparently of Spanish extraction: "Allow me to say that I consider it as an insult to offer to a Catholic Priest a book as per pamphlet. Your idea about a Catholic priest must be a very low one. Our faith has been modern enough for about 2000 years and ever shall be. A fool can tear down but it needs more than a fool's strength to uphold the truth."

The best and in fact the noblest reply comes from a devout Roman Catholic layman who writes as follows:

"Is the writer a Catholic priest? My answer is that if so he was not reared in a Catholic family and is probably a convert. This is important in accounting for his point of view.<sup>1</sup> The Massachusetts priest took the matter too seriously.<sup>2</sup> He belongs to the type of men of times gone by when people were quartered for not sharing the same views as the dominant party in both the political and religious world. The writer of the letters is in evident trouble and needs sympathy, not abuse. However, he is a poet and not practical. There are some abuses in the human side of church government. This is true of all monarchies, and republics are not free from them.

<sup>1</sup>The author of *Letters to His Holiness* is a born Catholic of Irish extraction.

<sup>2</sup>This has reference to a communication formerly received *in re* "Letters to His Holiness." See *Open Court*, April, 1910, p. 385.

Time will do much to modify them. Fifty years of the Papal Court in the United States would change the whole human side of church management without altering one truth the Church teaches. This, however, will never be, for many, many reasons. Under present conditions it may take centuries, not half centuries, to work the change. This poor distracted writer will I think eventually find mental peace when he feels less keenly his personal burden in righting things."

An Episcopalian sympathizes with the author in these words: "I am glad that an American Roman Catholic has had the courage to speak out on the subject as he has. I cannot help wishing that a copy of the book were in the hands of all intelligent persons. I have in my library *Modernism* by Sabatier; *Medievalism* by Tyrrell; and *The Gospel and the Church* by Loisy, and must say that, to my mind, the writer of *Letters to His Holiness Pope Pius X* need not 'take a back seat.'"

A converted Catholic expresses his appreciation of the Modernist's struggle for liberty, but he is not satisfied with the negativism of the book. He says: "We want something constructive, the lack of which has been the weakness of Tyrrell and the Italian and French fine spirits. I think this can be attained by adherence to Christ not only as Teacher, but also as Saviour. I hope and pray your Modernist will see in the New Testament a testimony of the Holy Spirit, and not a creed of contentious Godless theologians. To the humble and contrite of heart, the patient, loving, serving, God reveals himself in Christ Jesus."

We conclude our selection with the following anonymous letter: "I wonder how such men as 'Modernist' have the courage to attempt to fight the great institution of the church of Rome. All attempts at undermining its existence, or even effecting its reform must be vain, for it is built upon the solidest foundation, i. e., the ineradicable stupidity of mankind. This is so universal that the claim of the church to Catholicity cannot be disputed. The majority of our kin belong to the great sheep-fold where they should be properly attended to and fleeced. There are plenty of Modernists in the church, but they are wiser than your author, and keep peace. The writer is one of them, and so you will please excuse him if he signs himself, merely, Another."

There is no need of making extracts from the comments of the Catholic and non-Catholic press on the Modernist's book, because they have been well summed up in the advertisement which accom-



panies the present number of *The Open Court*. There is only one paper from which we will quote in this connection.

We are much obliged to the *New World*, a Catholic organ of Chicago, for calling our attention to a mistake in the Preface where by some inadvertence Leo X, the Pope of the Reformation, is called Gregory X. This slip does not invalidate the statement of this pope's love of pagan art which has impressed itself upon the church and is its glory still. Worse mistakes are made than this harmless substitution of a wrong name, nor does it change the fact that Modernist has been recommended to us as a sincere and deeply religious man. And we believe the statement, for men who are religiously and morally indifferent do not write books of this kind. But the reviewer, a former brother of the cloth of Modernist, is sure that Modernist is an outcast, "wallowing among the weeds" that any kind word spoken in his favor is "a lie or deception." What shall we think of the reviewer who in the *New World* writes thus: "We are quite justified, we think, in challenging every fact in a book where its foreword is *a lie or deception*."<sup>3</sup> We aver and we know whereof we speak that the author of these letters addressed to our Holy Father is no longer a priest in good standing in the Catholic Church nor is he 'devoted to his pastoral work.' Rather does he stand outside the wall *where the weeds are thrown over*<sup>3</sup>. . . . Indeed the author practically disposes of himself. He writes himself down in every page of his 'Letters' not as an honest and sincere thinker, but rather as a man pressed down by the nightmare of a grievance and he seeks consolation in the fact that he is wallowing among the 'weeds' wherein slumber the memory of Gratry, Montefeltro, Gioberti, Lamennais, Döllinger, Schell and Tyrrell."

This style of disposing of an enemy is not wise. It may have been successful in the days of the massacre of St. Bartholomew but to-day it only refreshes unpleasant memories of the past. Yet it is still characteristic of the typical Romanist to vilify Luther and men kin to his spirit such as Döllinger, Loisy, Tyrrell and other independent thinkers and herein His Holiness himself in his naive outspokenness is not an exception. However the Curia found out that the world has moved and it may pay the Vatican in the future to have more respect for the views of heretics. These modes of arguing have lost power and those who employ them simply prove that they have learned nothing and forgotten nothing.

We repeat that in many respects we do not endorse the position of Modernist, author of *Letters to His Holiness*, but we have pub-

<sup>3</sup> Italics are ours.

lished his book because we believe that his attitude is honestly taken and that his criticism will pave the way for a much needed reform. That Modernist does not stand alone appears from other publications of a similar type, some of which are reviewed in this number; and there are many more symptoms of the time which prove that the Roman Catholic church is now standing "At the cross roads." We wish heartily that she would choose aright.

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In conclusion we wish to state that in spite of these protests against Modernism and in spite of the declaration that Modernism is a dead issue, the Catholic church is stirred to its foundation in almost all countries where it exists. In Germany the Reichstag has protested against the Pope's encyclical and even the Catholic King of Saxony has expressed his disapproval. In France the separation of church and state is now perfectly assured, and Spain rebels while continuing to wear the yoke.

What will be the outcome of all this? Is the existence of Catholicism endangered? Certainly not. But it is not improbable that Romanism which held an absolute sway over the Catholic church will lose much of its power, and we heartily wish that in the long run it may be entirely overcome. The conquest of Romanism will not mean the end of Catholicism but its purification, its reform, and a renewed lease of life.