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THE ENCYCLICAL ON "MODERNISM."

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Introductory.

OF our many critics who take scandal at the Encyclical of 1908, which condemned Modernism, few have troubled to read it, and fewer still, having read it, have succeeded in understanding it. The mass of them have been content to assume that anything coming from the Pope and bearing the character of prohibition must needs be bad—since it is their cherished maxim that every prohibition of men's opinions is for those who heed it an obstruction in the pathway to truth. Perhaps, if they would reflect, it might strike them as significant that, in religious communions at all events, wherever a free and unchecked latitude of belief is allowed, the ultimate consequence is an undermining of religious belief altogether. At any rate they would come to see that unwavering adherence to a code of doctrines handed down from the far past is the very foundation on which the Catholic Church is built, and from which, under God, she has derived the strength and tenacity of her existence through all these centuries. Yet, if this has been the persistent law of her being all-through, it is surely unreasonable to expect that she will abandon it now; and so, when any doctrinal controversy arises between her and a section of her own children, those who conceive themselves entitled to judge between her and them should at least keep distinct in their minds these two questions, Is the system she condemns Catholic, and, Is it true? If under the guidance of their own lights they conclude that it is true, it is to be

expected that so far they will range themselves on the side of the condemned. Still, unless they can conclude also that there is no incompatibility, but only the relation of logical development, between the traditional Catholic doctrines and the doctrines proscribed as Modernism, they ought obviously to range themselves on the Pope's side, so far as to acknowledge that he has only acted as a Pope must act, if he be faithful to his trust. It may seem that in thus presenting the issue we are thinking too much of our non-Catholic critics, too little of the Catholic readers who look for some guidance towards understanding the Encyclical *Pascendi*. But it may be useful also for Catholics to approach the subject from this standpoint. They are very liable in a country like this to fall into the same confusions of thought as those among whom they live, whereas if they learn to distinguish between the two questions just put, and to realize the necessity of answering the first in the negative, they are likely—unless, indeed, they have lost their faith—to answer the second question in the negative also, and are in a better position to appreciate the intrinsic grounds on which that negative answer rests. We shall, then, in the present tract, be occupied mainly, if not entirely, with the question whether the theory of religious belief which the Encyclical describes and condemns is not palpably opposed to the Catholic belief to which we and our forefathers have been brought up.

Modernism Described.

The Encyclical has three parts, of which the first, which is far the longest, gives an account of what it means by Modernism, the second assigns its causes, and the third indicates the measures to be taken for its extirpation. It is the first of these three parts with which we shall be concerned, as that is the part which most requires explanation. Indeed, we feel an exceptional difficulty in endeavouring to make it intelligible to our readers, for the theory itself is very abstruse, and unknown to all save a very small group of persons, whilst the Encyclical, being addressed to Bishops, not

to the faithful generally, is in the language of a philosophical treatise, and not that of a popular explanation. Besides which, a theory like this of Modernism, which has not even yet been embodied by its adherents in any official statement, is necessarily understood differently in some respects by different minds, and the description of any one of its varieties is sure to be challenged by the adherents of its other varieties. We must, however, follow the lines of the Encyclical, which agrees substantially with what one finds in the books of the party, and at all events is that on which the impact of the condemnation falls.

Its Philosophical Starting-point.

The Pope begins by stating his intention to exhibit the theory as a connected whole, with bearings on philosophy, belief, theology, history, criticism, apologetics, and Church administration. The starting-point is in *philosophy*, and is from the Kantian principle, or rather fallacy, which confines the limits of human knowledge to *phenomena*, that is, "to the things that appear to our senses, and so far forth as they appear." According to this principle, all that lies beyond, and appertains to "things in themselves," is, for our reasoning faculty, the Unknowable. To that unseen sphere of being we have no sufficient grounds for assuming that the processes of our reasoning faculty apply. Accordingly, there perish straight off (1) the science of Natural Theology, which attempts to deduce the existence and some of the attributes of God, as being the First Cause without presupposing which the existence of the visible world is unintelligible; (2) the science of Christian Evidences, which gathers from the life of our Lord—its miraculous character, and its relation as fulfilling them to the ancient prophecies—that He came from God and spoke in the name of God; (3) the claims of the Christian revelation to be taken as a communication from God to man. For, if our laws of inference which hold for the world of phenomena may, for aught we know, not hold for the

world beyond, it must be pseudo-science which professes to infer anything whatever about God, whether as existing, as accrediting earthly representatives, or as speaking to man through them. Hence the nickname of Intellectualists, with which the "Modernists" are wont to brand those who put trust in what they deem to be pseudo-science.

The "Religious Sentiment."

But it must not be supposed that the Modernists deny all these truths about God. They deny that we can be led to accept them by any reasoning process, but they indicate to us another process which will lead us to them more securely. It is a process to which they give the abstruse name of "vital immanence," and is of the following character: Religion of some kind, whether natural or supernatural, is a fact in the world, for although individuals, and numbers of individuals, may appear to be without it, it is sufficiently general and persistent in the human race to render it a fact which requires explanation. And since, for the reasons given, it is impossible to obtain the explanation from beyond the frontier of immanence, by recourse to the principle of causality, it must be sought within that frontier, and, being a character of life, must be sought in the evolving *life* of man. There, however, it is found to be a certain movement or feeling (*sentiment*)¹ of the heart, which is the outcome of a corresponding need, the need, namely, of the divine. In other words, the races which have peopled the earth have invariably felt the need of the divine, and out of this feeling has grown a "religious sentiment" which has God (in some undefined way) for its cause and God for its object, and so is able to unite the soul with God. For the better understanding of its nature there are one or two things to be observed. First, it is not at first present to consciousness, but rather is latent in "subconsciousness," from which it

¹ The Latin word in the Encyclical is *sensus*, but "sentiment" rather than "sense" is the best English term by which to render what the Modernists mean by it.

emerges into actual consciousness only when such circumstances arise as bring the Unknowable impressively before the mind. Secondly, this sentiment being the source of all religion, it is what we must understand by *faith*, and it is also what we must understand by *revelation*—since, whilst a revelation coming to man from without is inconceivable, this religious sentiment exhibits all the properties of a revelation, inasmuch as, having God for its cause, it comes from God, and having God for its object, it makes God known. Thirdly—since the Unknowable, when it presents itself and is taken by the religious sentiment for the divine, does so not as something bare and isolated, but as intimately connected with some phenomena of nature or human personality, which are deemed to be inexplicable by the ordinary laws of physics or history—this religious sentiment, or faith, infuses, so to speak, its own life into the phenomenon, transfiguring it and distorting it from its true character into one which it deems more suitable for a clothing of the divine. Whence the necessity for the historian and the critic, when they have to deal with phenomena that have been thus transformed, to begin by restoring to them their true historical character; by removing (1) the divine which faith has recognized in them, and then the extras with which it has clothed them by (2) transfiguration, and (3) distortion—a threefold process which is said to constitute the foundation of historical criticism. For instance, faith found its divine object in the person of Christ, and forthwith transfigured it and distorted it from the real form in which He appeared on earth, and this is why in the Gospel story, as it has come down to us, there is so much of the seemingly miraculous. But science and history, being now equipped with a sound method, realize that there cannot have been anything in the historical Christ which was not purely human. Hence, says the Encyclical, the Modernists claim that

by the first canon [of criticism] deduced from agnosticism, whatever savours of the Divine must be eliminated from His history [as it has come down to us] . . . by the second canon, whatever [in that

history] lifts Him above historical conditions, is to be removed . . . [as] by the third canon must be removed all those discourses or deeds, all things, in short, which are not in keeping with the mind, the condition, the education, the place and time in which He lived.

This explanation of what, according to the new philosophy, is the task imposed on science and history by the action of the religious sentiment on certain of their materials is an incidental digression, returning from which the Encyclical continues its account of the religious sentiment itself :

[It] has sprung, as we have seen, from the recesses of subconsciousness by vital immanence, and is the germ of all religion and the explanation of all that has been or ever will be in any religion. This sentiment, which was at first only rudimentary and almost formless, gradually matured under the influence of the same mysterious principle from which it originated, with the progress of human life, of which, as has been said, it is itself a form. This, then, is the origin of all religions, even supernatural religion. It is only a development of this religious sentiment. Nor is the Catholic religion an exception ; it is quite on a level with the rest ; for it was engendered by the process of vital immanence in the consciousness of Christ, who was a man of the choicest nature, whose like has never been nor will be.

The Religious Function of Intellect.

If the intellect is, according to this new philosophy, unable of itself to transcend the borders of the phenomenal, it has its part in ministering to the evolution of the act of faith which has been identified with the action of the religious sentiment, and at the stage we have reached the Encyclical indicates what this part is held to be :

This sentiment . . . being sentiment, not cognition, though God presents Himself to man in it, He does it in a form so confused and indistinct that He can hardly, if at all, be discerned by the believing person. Hence it is necessary that it [the sentiment] should be illumined by some light in order that God may be clearly distinguished and set apart from it. And this office belongs to the intellect, whose function it is to think and analyze ; by whose instrumentality it is that man first transforms the vital phenomena that arise within him into concepts and next expresses them in words. Hence the maxim common among Modernists that a religious-minded man should *think* his faith. Thus, then, the mind, supervening on this sentiment, applies itself to

it, and—as a Modernist leader explains—works on it like a painter who works over the canvas of a faded picture to restore the brightness of its colouring. In which work the mind exercises a twofold operation, one natural and spontaneous, by which it expresses the object in some simple and ordinary proposition; the other, reflex and profound, by which, as they put it, it elaborates its thought and expresses it in secondary propositions that are derived, indeed, from the previous simple proposition, but are more exact and distinct. And these *secondary* propositions, if they should in due course receive the sanction of the Church's highest authority, are what constitute *dogma*.

The Nature of Dogma.

Here the Encyclical is led to consider the nature and purpose of *dogmas* in this new philosophy. They spring, we have seen, from the primitive, simple, and ordinary propositions in which the natural and spontaneous operation of the mind issues, but consist in the more elaborate secondary formulas; and their purpose is not to state what the truth is in itself, "but to supply the believer with the means of rendering to himself an account of his faith." They are tentative in fact, and find their primary and essential justification not in the arguments by which the intellect supports them, but in the success with which they satisfy the aspirations of the religious sentiment; and hence must not remain fixed and immutable, but must undergo such progressive changes as may be necessary to adapt them to the evolving phases of the religious sentiment. It is with them, it would seem, much as it is with the dishes which the cooks prepare according to the rules of the culinary art, but which have their primary justification in proportion as they are able to meet the tastes and sustain the health of the eaters; and which, if they are to succeed in this, must be changed and made progressively more delicate to meet the changes of palate and stomach consequent on the transition from the lower to the higher stages of social refinement. This comparison is not in the Encyclical, but it may assist the reader to understand better the following important paragraph.

To ascertain the nature of dogma we must first find the relation which exists between the *religious formulas* and the *religious sentiment*. This will be readily perceived by him who realizes that these formulas

have no other purpose than to furnish the believer with a means of giving an account of his faith to himself. These formulas, therefore, stand midway between the believer and his faith; in their relation to the faith they are the inadequate expression of its object and are usually called *symbols*; in their relation to the believer they are *mere instruments*. Hence it is quite impossible to maintain that they express absolute truth; for, in so far as they are *symbols*, they are the images of truth, and so must be adapted to the religious sentiment in its relation to man; and as *instruments* they are the vehicles of truth, and must, therefore, in their turn be adapted to man in his relation to the religious sentiment. But the object of the *religious sentiment*, since it embraces the *absolute*, possesses an infinite variety of aspects, of which now one, now another, may present itself. In like manner he who believes may pass through different phases. Consequently the formulas which we call dogmas must be subject to these vicissitudes, and are therefore liable to change. Thus the way is open to the intrinsic *evolution* of dogma. An immense collection of sophisms this that ruins and destroys all religion. Dogma is not only able, but ought, to evolve and to be changed. This is strongly affirmed by the Modernists, and as clearly flows from their principles. For amongst the chief points of their teaching is this which they deduce from the principle of *vital immanence*; that religious formulas, to be really religious and not merely theological speculations, ought to be living and to live the life of the religious sentiment. This is not to be understood in the sense that these formulas, especially if merely imaginative, are made to suit the religious sentiment itself—for their origin is of no more consequence than their number and quality—but that the religious sentiment, having if needed introduced some modification into them, should be able to assimilate them vitally. In other words, it is necessary that the primitive formula be accepted and sanctioned by the heart, and similarly the subsequent work from which spring the secondary formulas must proceed under the guidance of the heart. Hence it comes that these formulas to be living should be, and should remain, adapted to the faith and to him who believes. Wherefore if for any reason this adaptation should cease to exist they lose their first meaning and must accordingly be changed.

The Office of Modernist Faith.

Up to this point the Encyclical has been considering the Modernist as a philosopher. Now it passes on to consider him as a *believer*. As a philosopher all he claims to know about the religious sentiment which he calls faith, is that it is a subjective fact in the life of the heart which looks to the divine reality as its object. As a believer he goes further, and is "convinced and certain that this divine reality exists in itself and quite independently of the person who believes in it." But on

what ground? That of "the *private experience* of the individual."

In the *religious sentiment* one must recognize a kind of intuition of the heart which puts man in immediate contact with the very reality of God, and infuses such a persuasion of God's existence and His action both within and without man as to excel greatly any scientific conviction. They [the Modernists] assert, therefore, the existence of a true experience, and one of a kind that surpasses all rational experience. If this experience is denied by some, like the rationalists, it arises from the fact that such persons are unwilling to put themselves in the moral state which is necessary to produce it. It is this *experience* which, when a person acquires it, makes him properly and truly a believer.

And the private experience of the individual is further invoked by the Modernist to give a new explanation of the *tradition* of the Church. Hitherto tradition has been regarded in the Catholic Church as an external test by which to distinguish the true revelation from the false, yet now this private experience of the individual, whilst professing to sustain it, virtually supplants it. For tradition, as it understands it, cannot any longer be held to consist in the handing down of a body of truths revealed to this world by a voice speaking from beyond its borders, but must be regarded as the handing down of the stores of religious experience which, originating in the devout reflections of the most surpassing of men, Jesus Christ, have been repeated, reattested, enlarged, and in some respects corrected, in their passage through the hearts of generations of Christian men, and so have attained to the volume and intensity of the Catholic belief of modern times.

By the Modernists tradition is understood as a communication to others through preaching, by means of intellectual formulas, of an *original experience*. To these formulas, in addition to their representative value, they attribute a species of suggestive efficacy which acts both on the person who believes to stimulate the religious sentiment should it happen to have grown sluggish and to renew the experience once acquired, and on those who do not yet believe to awake for the first time the religious *sentiment* in them and to produce the *experience*. In this way is religious experience propagated among the nations, and not merely among contemporaries by preaching, but among future generations both by books and by oral transmission from one to another.

The Relation of Faith to Science.

If such is faith, what is *the relation of faith to science*? It is replied that there can no longer be a possibility of antagonism, inasmuch as they move in planes altogether separate and never crossing each other.

Faith occupies itself solely with something which science declares to be *unknowable* for it. Hence each has a separate field assigned to it: science is entirely concerned with the reality of phenomena, into which faith does not enter at all; faith, on the contrary, concerns itself with the Divine reality, which is entirely unknown to science. Thus the conclusion is reached that there can never be any dissension between faith and science, for if each keeps on its own ground they can never meet, and therefore never be in contradiction. And if it be objected that in the visible world there are some things which appertain to faith, as the human life of Christ, the Modernists reply by denying this. For though such things come within the category of phenomena, still, in as far as they are *lived* by faith, and in the way described have been by faith *transfigured* and *distorted*, they have been removed from the world of sense and translated to become material for the divine. Hence should it be further asked whether Christ has wrought real miracles and made real prophecies, whether He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, the answer of agnostic science will be in the negative and the answer of faith in the affirmative—yet there will not be, on any account, any conflict between them. For it will be denied by the philosopher as philosopher, speaking to philosophers, and considering Christ only in His historical reality; and it will be affirmed by the believer speaking as a believer and to believers, and considering the life of Christ as lived again by faith and in faith.

It turns out, however, that much which one would have naturally referred to the plane of faith has to be referred to the plane of science—with the result that, as the Encyclical puts it, practically, though science is made independent of faith, faith is not made independent of science but subject to it.

For in the first place it must be observed that in every religious fact, when you take away the *divine reality* and the *experience* of it which the believer possesses, all things else, and especially its religious formulas, belong to the sphere of phenomena, and therefore fall under the control of science. . . . Further, when it is said that God is the object of faith alone, the statement refers only to the *divine reality*, not to the *idea* of God. This latter also is subject to science, which, while it philosophizes in what is called the logical order, attains even to what is

absolute and ideal. It is, therefore, the right of philosophy and of science to form conclusions concerning the *idea* of God, to direct it in its evolution, and to purify it of any extraneous elements which may become confounded with it. Finally, man does not suffer a dualism to exist in him, and the believer, therefore, feels within him an impelling need to harmonize faith with science, that it may never oppose the general conception which science sets forth concerning the universe.

The Scope of Modernist Theology.

In what it has said about the Modernist as a philosopher and as a believer, the Encyclical has laid down for us the fundamental principles of the new theory, and, these once accepted, rigidly predetermine the character of their application in the fields of theology, history and criticism, apologetics and Church reform. The Encyclical carries its examination into these fields, and insists with some minuteness on the conclusions within them at which the Modernist arrives. In the present tract it will be best not to burden the readers with more than they can take in at one time: we shall confine ourselves, therefore, to what the Encyclical says about Modernist *theology*, or rather to a brief summary of it.

As hitherto understood, the office of theology proper, as distinguished from faith, is to take the truths which faith certifies as data from which to start, and make a profound study of their meaning and significance, of their accurate definition, of their inter-relations as elements in a complete doctrinal system, as well as of the further conclusions which can be gathered from them by rational deduction. Theology, as the Modernist theory would reconstruct it, has for its task to reconcile faith with science, that is to say, the demands of the religious sentiment with the demands made by contemporary science on those religious formulas by which, as we have seen, the intellect assists the believer to give an account of his faith. And to effect this reconciliation it has, says the Encyclical, three principles at its service—the principle of *immanence*, according to which the *religious sentiment* is the

final judge of what is true in the plane of religion, but science is the final judge in regard to the religious formulas with which the religious sentiment is furnished by the intellect, these formulas not belonging to the plane of religion; the principle of *symbolism*, according to which these religious formulas, not reaching directly the unseen realities, are but symbolic, tentative, and provisional representations of the same, which may with the advance of knowledge be found inconsistent with the truth of visible facts, and have to be "re-stated"—that is, remodelled and transformed; and thirdly, the principle of *divine permanence*, which is akin with *tradition* in the relation it bears to *vital immanence*, and, according to which "all Christian consciousnesses were . . . in a manner virtually included in the consciousness of Christ as the plant is included in the seed; [and] as the shoots live the life of the seed, so, too, all Christians are to be said to live the life of Christ"—or, in other words, the divine life of Christ persists and is *permanent* in the life of the Church.

Some Doctrinal Transformations.

To apply these principles of reconciliation. First, as regards the origin of the Sacraments. For a sacrament to be such it has been believed to be essential that it should have been instituted by Jesus Christ Himself. But for various reasons it is contended that this can no longer be maintained. Agnosticism sees nothing in Christ more than a man whose religious consciousness has been formed by degrees; the law of immanence rejects the idea of the historical Christ having done anything involving an exercise of superhuman authority; the law of evolution requires that institutions shall not have come full-grown into being, but shall have developed gradually and slowly from initial germs: and history is said to testify against the supposition of an immediate institution of the Sacraments by Christ. Therefore, say the Modernists, they were instituted at later dates by the Church, or, rather, brought in by the

gradual evolution of her life, which life, however, being by the principle of divine permanence a persistence and expansion of the life of Christ, faith is justified in referring the institution to Christ Himself.

As regards *dogma* sufficient has been already indicated. It is not to be ascribed to any revelation made by our Lord to His Church the nature of which the Church has been solicitous to understand accurately, to guard, and to expand by logical deductions. Rather

it is born of the species of impulse or necessity, by virtue of which the believer is constrained to elaborate his religious thought so as to render it clearer for himself and others; [and] this elaboration consists entirely in the process of penetrating and refining the primitive formula, not indeed in itself and according to logical development, but as required by circumstances, or *vitally*, as the Modernists more abstrusely put it.

In regard to *worship*, we are brought again to the consideration of the Sacraments—that is, this time of their nature. They are born, according to this reconstructed version of them, of two needs, the need of giving to religion some sensible manifestation, and the need of propagating it by some sensible acts. Nor are they efficacious channels through which grace is given to the soul *ex opere operato*, but "mere symbols and signs," having no other kind of efficacy save that of phrases "which, having had the good fortune to impress minds, have proved to be powerful instruments for propagating certain great and impressive ideas."

The *character of the Sacred Scriptures* is similarly explained. They are a "collection of experiences, not indeed of those that may come to anybody, but of those choice and extraordinary experiences which may have happened in any religion." Nor must their inspiration be set down to the voice of God speaking from without, but "of God speaking from within through the impulse of vital immanence and permanence," only more vehemently than in the ordinary case of the religious sentiment declaring its beliefs.

The Modernist Idea of the Church.

So, too, is the character of *the Church* and of its authority radically transformed. No longer must it be held that the Church owes its existence and the authority of its rulers to the direct and immediate institution of Jesus Christ. Rather it is the outcome of a double need, "the need of the individual believer, especially if he has had some original and special experience, to communicate his faith to others; and the need of the mass, when faith has become common to many, to form itself into a society, and to guard, increase, and propagate the common good"; and it is "the product of the *collective conscience*,¹ that is to say, of the society of individual consciences which, by virtue of the principle of vital permanence, all depend on one first believer, who for Catholics is Christ"; whilst Church authority has its origin in the "need" which this society, like every other, has of "a directing authority to guide its members towards the common end, and to conserve prudently the elements of cohesion, which in a religious society are doctrine and worship." This of course means that "authority, like the Church, has its origin in the religious conscience, and that being so, is subject to it." It cannot, then, without tyranny, oppose itself to the demands of the public conscience, and since "the public conscience," in the present age, "has introduced popular government in the civil order," and "there are not two consciences in man any more than there are two lives," "it is for the ecclesiastical authority to shape itself to democratic forms, unless it wishes to provoke and foment an intestine conflict in the consciences of mankind." And again, although "no religious society can be a real unit unless the religious conscience of its members be one, and one also the formula they adopt"; and although

¹ The Latin word *conscientia* denotes all kinds of consciousness, including that particular kind which is concerned with the sense of what is good or bad in conduct, and in English is expressed by *conscience*. In the translation, therefore, according to the needs of the context, now *consciousness* now *conscience* is employed.

this double unity requires a common mind, whose office it is to find and determine the formula that corresponds best with the common conscience—and it must have, moreover, an authority sufficient to impose on the community the formula which has been decided upon ;

still, as

this *magisterium* springs in its last analysis from the individual consciences, and possesses its mandate of public utility for their benefit, it follows that . . . to prevent individual consciences from revealing freely and openly the impulses they feel, to hinder criticism from impelling dogmas towards their necessary evolutions—this is not a legitimate use but an abuse of a power given for public utility.

The Evolution of Doctrine.

The Encyclical next has a passage on the *evolution of doctrine*. According to the older theology doctrine, being the expression of absolute truth communicated by external revelation, is unchangeable in itself, though the faithful by study and meditation may attain to a progressively fuller penetration into its meaning. According to the new theology, "in a living religion everything is subject to change according to the law of evolution, dogma, Church, sacred books, faith itself—the changes being brought about not by the accretion of new and purely adventitious forms from without" (e.g., by the revelations of Jesus Christ) but "by an increasing penetration of the religious sentiment into the conscience," under the stimulus of the new needs and necessities emerging with the onward course of events. Thus faith changes from cruder to more refined forms of belief—from fetichism, for instance, to monotheism, from monotheism to Christianity, from primitive to modern Catholicism—that it may adapt itself to the general intellectual and moral refining by which "those men have been elevated and these changes are wrought, particularly through the action of religious geniuses called prophets, of whom Christ was the greatest," geniuses "whose lot it was to have new and original experiences fully in harmony with the needs of their time." Dogma changes under the stimulus of the obstacles faith has to surmount and the

contradictions it has to repel, this stimulus inciting to the elaboration of formulas better able to consist with them. Worship changes under the need of adapting itself to the use and customs of peoples. The Church changes that it may accommodate itself to historical conditions and existing forms of society.

Catholicism and Modernism Contrasted.

With the section on the Evolution of Doctrine the Encyclical ends its consideration of the Modernist as a theologian. The nature of what follows in regard to his procedure as a historian and critic, as an apologist and a Church Reformer, can be sufficiently gathered from the foregoing. We have then sufficiently before us the outlines of this new religious system as expounded to us by Pius X, and may judge of it for ourselves from the standpoint suggested at the beginning of this tract. That is, we may leave alone for the present the question whether the system is or is not well founded in itself, and ask only, is it Catholic? Can it be called a consistent development of Catholic faith and teaching as we have known it up to now, or must it be set down as directly opposed to Catholic faith and teaching and altogether incompatible with it? It is difficult to see how the second of these alternative answers can be resisted. Let us note particularly the following points of contrast.

I. IN REGARD TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

According to Catholicism, as we have known it hitherto, the human intellect is not under limitations which oblige it to treat all that lies beyond the world of appearances as unknowable. On the contrary it can, through the principle of causality, over-pass that border-line and attain to a knowledge not indeed exhaustive, but absolutely correct and certain as far as it goes, of many important truths relating to the unseen, and among them of the existence and attributes of God. This is laid down in the most formal manner by the

Vatican Council: "If any one says that the one true God cannot be known with certainty by the natural light of reason by means of the things that are made, let him be anathema." Nor is this canon in other than the clearest conformity with the doctrine expressed by the whole line of theologians—Fathers, sacred writers, from the author of the Book of Wisdom¹ downwards—all of whom appeal to the self-same argument of causality, and hold for blameworthy those who will not yield to its force. Yet the new Modernist theory flatly denies the validity of this mode of argument. Starting from its Kantian principle of Agnosticism, it lays down that the invisible world is the unknowable world, and we can repose no trust whatever in the conclusions our reason may arrive at concerning God or anything else that appertains to that hidden region.

2. IN REGARD TO THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST.

According to Catholicism, as we have known it hitherto, Jesus Christ came into the world claiming to be the ambassador of God and even the Son of God. In support of these claims He appealed, as involving a divine attestation of their justice, to the *miracles* He wrought and the *prophecies* He fulfilled; and, having thus established His claim to speak in God's name and deliver God's message, He taught us the code of doctrinal truths which we call the Christian revelation. This also is affirmed in the clearest terms by the Vatican Council.

It declares that, besides the way of coming to know God through things created by the natural light of reason,

it has pleased His wisdom and goodness to provide another and supernatural way by which to reveal Himself and the eternal decrees of His will to the human race: [wherefore], as the Apostle says, "Having in past days spoken at many times and in many ways to our forefathers through the prophets, in these latter days God has spoken to us through His Son."

¹ Wisdom, cap. xiii.

And again that

to render the obedience of our faith conformable to reason, God has willed to conjoin with the interior aids of the Holy Spirit, external proofs of His revelation, divine facts and especially miracles and prophecies, which, inasmuch as they evidence the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, are signs of a divine revelation which are both most certain and adapted to the intelligence of all.

And here again the Vatican is only formulating what has always been held and taught in the Church by theologians, Fathers, Apostles, and even our Lord Himself. It is a consistent scheme of divine revelation, and the scheme which, in contrast with it, is set up by the Modernists, is also, it must be acknowledged, consistent with itself. If human reason is incapable of any certain knowledge of God, it follows that it cannot be capable of recognizing the divine character of such facts as miracles and prophecies, and hence of recognizing that there was anything more than purely human in the personality of Jesus Christ. If, then, in any narrative of His life, such as is furnished by the four Gospels, miracles are ascribed to Him, or predictions fulfilled in Him which are not explicable as coincidences, the only consistent course for the Modernist is to assume that these superhuman occurrences were not genuine facts, and to inquire by what myth-making or other process of the devout imagination they came to be read into the story. And so the historical Christ becomes "a man of the choicest nature" indeed, but still only a man, whom it is impossible to regard as the trustworthy organ of a divine revelation. Accordingly, we have here, too, not a development but a flat contradiction between the belief of the Catholic Church and the Modernist tenets.

3. IN REGARD TO THE NATURE OF FAITH.

Next we come to the question of *faith*. According to Catholicism, as we have known it hitherto, faith is the assent given to propositions the truth of which is certified to us not directly by the light of our personal reasoning, but indirectly, and on the testimony of God,

which we can absolutely trust. So defined it is of like nature with the faith we repose, in regard to earthly facts and truths, in the testimony of human witnesses more experienced than ourselves and known to be truthful. Provided we can have evidence, of the nature specified in the last section, that God has really spoken, the human mind easily recognizes this to be a reasonable mode of arriving at truths otherwise inaccessible to us. And here once more we have a Vatican decree enforcing the definition :

This faith, as the Catholic Church professes, is a supernatural virtue by which, through the gift of God and the aid of grace, we believe that the things revealed by Him are true, not because of their intrinsic truth as seen by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God Himself who reveals them to us, and who can neither be deceived or deceive.

Again, too, the Vatican definition is one which the simplest inspection of the writings of theologians, Fathers, and Apostles will show to be in accord with them. Such a definition for the Modernist, however, is inadmissible, for it implies a divinely authenticated external witness to make the revelation, and that, as we have seen, his fundamental principle of agnosticism forbids him to recognize. Hence the substitution of another species of faith, that of the *religious sentiment*, which, evolving under the action of vital immanence, arrives by means of suitable experiences at "a firm conviction" that there is a God, personal, omnipotent, omniscient, all-good, &c. ;¹ that Jesus Christ, even though historical criticism can find nothing super-

¹ It has been suggested in some quarters that this doctrine of the "religious sentiment" as the source of our religious knowledge is substantially the same as that of Cardinal Newman in the *Grammar of Assent*. The reader should not be misled into imagining this to be the case. The Holy See is not likely to have wished to condemn our great Cardinal and his luminous teaching in this indirect way, and we know as a fact that the idea did not enter into its mind. Besides, although with a little ingenuity it may be possible to bring together some Modernist phrases and some phrases of the Cardinal's, and draw a plausible parallel between them, the two conceptions on analysis are radically different and opposed. On this see *Cardinal Newman and Modernism*, in the *Month* for June, 1912.

human in His life, was the ambassador of God and even the Son of God; and that the whole doctrinal code of the Catholic Church is true, at least in a symbolic sense. This "firm conviction" is taken by the Modernist as sufficiently certifying us of the objective truth, in a symbolic sense, of these doctrines, but it is not easy for our minds to see how that can be. What is this *religious sentiment*? Is it of the nature of perception or volition? If of perception, why is it not referred to the intellect like the other perceptive acts that occur within us? If of volition, which seems to be the case since it is called an "intuition of the heart," how can volition assure us of the nature of anything, or do more than supply a ground from which some perceptive faculty can infer some truth? These are questions which at once suggest themselves when we hear of the new species of faith originated and matured by vital immanence; but in any case the opposition between faith of this sort and the faith which believes on the warrant of the divine attestation is as marked and complete as can well be.

4. IN REGARD TO THE NATURE OF DOGMA.

In regard to *dogma*, too, the opposition is radical. According to Catholicism, as we have known it hitherto, the doctrines of the Christian revelation are true beyond fear of doubt for all times and places. The warrant for their truth is ultimately the testimony of Christ, and proximately the teaching of the Catholic Church, which the Holy Spirit guards from error in her exercise of this teaching office. When the Church makes it clear beyond doubt, in undisputed cases by the tenor of her daily teaching and in controverted cases by her solemn decrees, that such and such doctrines are a true part of the Christian revelation, then doctrines are called dogmas, and, being what they are, are immutable. They may come to be more fully understood by the faithful, but they will never need to be set aside in the interests of greater accuracy. On the other hand, according to the Modernist theory, dogmas are religious

formulas tentatively set before the religious sentiment by the devout mind, but which, being only approximations to the truth, and besides symbolic in their relation to the object-world, are liable and even likely to require reconstruction or rejection with the flight of time and the advance of investigation. Moreover, the final test by which their validity is determined is not the voice of Christ speaking with authority through the Church, but acceptance on the part of the religious sentiment which finds them conformable to its need.

And this Modernist conception of dogma involves a further and twofold opposition to Catholicism, as we have known it hitherto. For if the test of doctrinal truth is neither with the rational motives intrinsic to the doctrine, nor with the external testimony of Christ and His Church, but with acceptance or rejection on the part of the religious sentiment, how are we to distinguish between Natural and Supernatural Religion; and again, between the true and false forms of Christianity? Natural Religion, as the Church understands it, is the Religion based on such knowledge of God as we can attain by the exercise of reason apart from revelation. Supernatural Religion is the religion based on the revelation made to man by our Lord Jesus Christ. As the latter elevates man far above the exigencies of his natural state, it is not due to him, and so cannot become known to him except by revelation. The difference, again, between the true and the spurious forms of Christianity is to be determined by reference to the testimony and commands of Christ, preserved to us by the methods and institutions which He originated and authenticated. Here are tests which under our present system we can apply, and so hope to arrive at the truth. But, under the new theory of dogma and its relation to the *religious sentiment*, how are we to discriminate in this important matter? The *religious sentiment*, however much it may have been fed and nurtured by experience, has but the alternative acts—to accept or reject a dogma or practice according as it finds itself in living harmony with it, or the reverse. Moreover, its acceptance when accorded is the outcome of a

natural need ; that is, of an exigency which, in the case of supernatural religion, supposing it to be such, cannot arise. And if, as regards the choice between Catholicism and (say) Protestantism, one large group agrees in finding that its religious sentiment is satisfied only by the Catholic system, and another only by the Protestant, on what ground is one to be deemed universally preferable to the other ? It might be said that the strength of endurance was a criterion. But Hinduism and Buddhism are both older than Catholicism, and Mohammedanism is only six centuries younger, and, if it may now seem to some possible to predict an early dissolution of Protestantism, how was that possible to our ancestors of two centuries ago ?

5. IN REGARD TO TRADITION AND SCRIPTURE.

Tradition, according to the Church's belief, is the faithful guardianship and transmission from generation to generation of the doctrines which in the first instance were revealed by our Lord Jesus Christ. And *Scripture*, according to the same belief, is the Word of God committed to writing by men who were under the dictation of the Holy Spirit. It is because this is their nature and origin that an absolute authority attaches to their contents, as the Vatican Council, following in the footsteps of the Council of Trent, has distinctly defined. But with the Modernist reconstruction of the conceptions of revelation and dogma there must now be a corresponding reconstruction of the conception of Tradition and Scripture. And so Jesus Christ becomes merely the founder of a great spiritual movement, and Tradition becomes the transmission to future generations, by preaching and other modes of oral communication, of the original experiences gathered by Him and others in the past ; whilst Scripture differs from Tradition only in this, that it contains "those original experiences of an extraordinary kind which have happened in any religion." Nor can the notion of authority constraining to acceptance be discovered anywhere in these reconstructed concepts

6. IN REGARD TO THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH.

The *Church*, according to Catholicism, as we have known it hitherto, has its origin in the commission given by our Lord to St. Peter and his fellow Apostles to go and teach all nations, accompanied as it was by the promise that they and their successors should be divinely guarded in the fulfilment of their trust, as well as by the sanction which exacted under the heaviest penalties acceptance of their teaching and obedience to their commands. It is from this source that the Church claims to derive that authority the exercise of which is found by the Modernist to be so cramping. But according to the latter the Church is "the product of the collective conscience, the society of individual consciences which depend on one first believer who is Christ." And the origin of Church authority is "in the need which every society has of a directing authority to guide it to the common end and to guard its doctrine and worship"—which involves that it is an authority coming to the Church's rulers from below not from above, from the people not from God, and overstepping its just limits and ceasing to bind when it sets itself in opposition to the democratic methods which are the modern people's will. How different these two conceptions are does not need to be shown.

7. IN REGARD TO THE SACRAMENTS.

The *Sacraments* have hitherto been held not only to signify but also to impart grace. But that implies institution by Christ during His earthly life, since none but He could give such power to a ceremonial rite. The Modernist conception of a sacrament is that it is a "bare sign or symbol with no power whatever to impart grace, but only to make a deep and useful impression on the mind and heart of the recipient," and not instituted immediately by Christ, but only mediately and at a date far removed from that of the Public Life. Again the opposition is palpable, and needs no showing.

Conclusion.

To conclude very briefly. Following in the footsteps of the Encyclical, we have endeavoured to explain, in language divested of technicalities and intelligible to the plain man, the character of this new system, and have called attention to the chief points of opposition between it and the Catholicism to which we have all been brought up. May we not conclude that, if we are to attach the name of Catholicism in any sense to the new system, we must call it Catholicism turned upside down? Why, then, should it be deemed surprising that the Pope has spoken out plainly and condemned it, especially if it is spreading, as it is said to be, particularly in France and Italy, and even infecting the minds of the young aspirants to the ministry, through the agency of their teachers. Had he forbore, would he not have been neglecting his trust and departing from the venerable tradition of his predecessors on the Apostolic throne?

Of outside critics there are indeed those who will admit freely that from the point of view indicated Pius X is fully justified and has shown an admirable courage; but who will tell us magisterially that in electing to be consistent with traditional Catholicism he has lost a golden opportunity of making terms with modern science and progress, and has embarked his Church on a course inevitably leading to destruction. Well, that is a kind of forewarning we have heard so often before, and it has ceased to impress us. In the past it has ever been not the Church but her monitors who have perished first; and confiding in the promise of indefectibility so marvellously fulfilled hitherto, we may trust that the issue from our present crisis will follow the same rule. At all events we cannot but feel that a Catholicism transformed in the sense of the Modernist theory would cease to have attractions for us and might well be allowed to perish.