



“RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.”

A LETTER TO

CARDINAL MANNING.

PART II.



BY

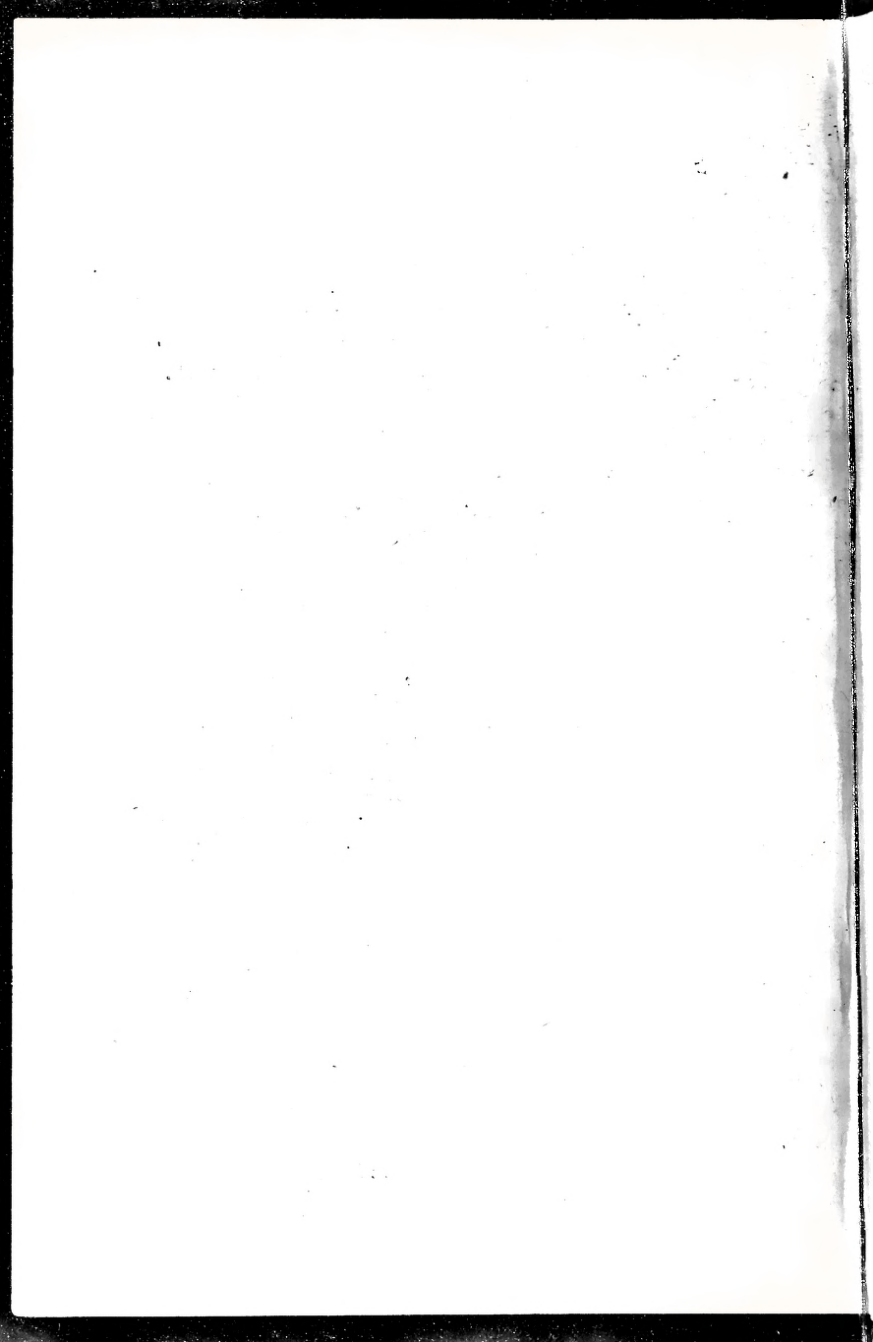
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"RELIGIOUS EDUCATION."

AND, Cardinal Manning, you will be gratified to hear that your Church played an exceedingly prominent part in the state of affairs the abolition of which you lament. Great numbers of "the noble and Christian people of France" were Huguenots. We will say nothing of how your Church waded through the blood of 70,000 of these Huguenots on a certain eve of St. Bartholomew. But here is a record in regard to how your Christian Catholics loved the Christian Huguenots: "Some they stripped naked, and, after they had offered them a thousand indignities, they stuck them with pins from head to foot; they cut them with pen-knives, tore them by the noses with red-hot pincers, and dragged them about the rooms. They tied fathers and husbands to the bed-posts, and ravished their wives and daughters before their eyes."* No doubt, since your Eminence considers these the amenities of a "noble and Christian people," you are justified in your opposition to the un-Christian character of School Board education. It will certainly not produce the state of things you seem to admire. No set of men brought up at a Board school will ever see any motive to use red-hot pincers upon the flesh of those trained at any other Board school. The teaching of secular subjects produces no such result. To produce *adult* actors in the red-hot pincers tragedy, you must train children in the horrid dogmas and ruthless intolerance of your Church. All the murder and martyrdom has been over your Catechisms. I have never heard that an inch of human flesh has been scorched, or that a drop of human blood has been shed, over the Rule-of-Three.

* Quick's "Synodicon," vol. i., pp. 130-131.

If you want all the old stabbing and scorching and persecution and hatred to go on as they were wont, you will, in early childhood, have to lay the substratum on which they are based. The School Board will engender only philadelphia and cosmopolitanism; therefore, you do well to attempt to arrest its hand, if you desire a continuance of theological sectarianism and rancour. Get hold of the children, *if you can*, my Lord Cardinal; for it will take very early and unfair initiation to induce them to tolerate, much less adore, your creed and you. I repeat, Get hold of them early, *if you can*; for remember the truism Dryden renders so epigrammatically in his "The Hind and the Panther":—

"By education most have been misled;
So they believe because they so were bred.
The priest continues what the nurse began,
And thus the child imposes on the man."

The Duc de Chartres built himself a magnificent brothel, to which from 150 to 200 fallen women were led each night blindfolded. A gorgeous supper, comprising the most generous and heating wines, was what met the eyes of the wantons when the bandages were removed therefrom. The 150 or 200 women sat down to the feast *in a state of perfect nudity*, and had the fiery vintages poured out to them by the assembled libertines.* Modesty cries to Mercy to let the curtain drop upon this carnival of lust participated in by "the noble and Christian people of France," before the "superficial minds" incited the populace to wash away the stains of Christian lechery in the blood of a godless revolution. Madame de Pompadour founded that "noble and Christian" institution, the *Parc aux Cerfs*, and to this institution were decoyed pretty maidens, no matter how young, to minister to the pampered sensualities of the king when Pompadour herself, in the course of years, had lost her fascinations as a courtesan. A secret police was instituted to entice, or kidnap, these young girls for sensual orgies in the *Parc aux Cerfs*. The pious Christian king insisted that these girl-children should tell their beads and say their prayers, anxious that he should

* *Vide* "Rege de Louis XVI.;" "Soulaire," vol. ii., pp. 103, 104.

have their bodies and that Christ should have their souls. Christ generously responded to this solicitude. One of the little kidnapped ministers of the king's licentiousness, a girl of fourteen, had contracted small-pox. From the girl, in whom it was as yet undeveloped, the king caught the disease. The malady was fire to tinder in the corrupt and poisonous blood of the royal debauchée. His body was one mass of nauseating putrescence. The stench from the dying lecher was so intense that no one could go near the bed upon which he festered and died. Before the writings of the "superficial minds" had had time to take effect, your God, Cardinal Manning, took this "noble and Christian" king unto himself, because that, when debauching the bodies of little girls, he was so solicitous that Christ should have their souls!

In 1777 the surface of their "noble and Christian" France was crawled over by 1,200,000 diseased beggars, all hungry, all in rags, all criminal and murderous, all suffering from hideous diseases which want and filth had brought on, but all "noble and Christian." For mercy's sake, your Eminence, do, when you are moved by the Lord Jesus Christ to speak, insist that he move you to speak a little nearer the truth! Remember you are not speaking amid the darkness of the seventh century, to which you refer so fondly. Remember that I, an irreconcilable layman, conduct a journal which shrinks not from the duty of speaking plainly to you, Cardinal though you be. The only arguments you ever had to meet such objections as I raise, such criticisms as I offer, were of the dungeon-and-fire order; and neither of these you can now employ against me. The storm of public opinion has blown the roof off your dungeon, and Free-thought stands defying you with her foot placed upon the torch that lit your martyr-fires. Do, then, keep a little nearer the truth; for, if you do not, I promise you I will strike and spare not; and although the *clientèle* I appeal to may not, in your opinion, be "noble," and is certainly not "Christian," it is neither small nor powerless; and it prefers my history to your faith, my blasphemy to your mass, and my sarcasm to your prayers. This *clientèle* can, if you persist in putting forward devout fallacies, afford to dispise your Eminence; but your

Eminence cannot afford to despise it ; for, unlike you, it raises no wail that its house is falling into decay : it faces you, young indeed, but strong and resolute ; and, panoplied in the armour of truth and righteousness, it means to go forward conquering and to conquer, till " noble " does mean *noble*, and till the term " Christian " is first execrated and then abandoned.

Let the tree of Roman Catholic education be judged by its fruits. Those ignorant and down-trodden thralls of " noble and Christian France " are a specimen of the fruits. Do you object : " These are the fruits of the laic branches of the tree " ? Very well, your Eminence, I am willing to stand by testing the fruit on the cleric branches of the tree—by the very Pope on the chair of St. Peter. Pope Sergius III., the vicegerent of God upon earth, lived in concubinage with a woman named Marocia. Pope John X. lived in concubinage with Theodora, a younger sister of Marocia. Pope John XII. converted the papal palace into a perfect seraglio, and lost his life by the hand of a husband whose wife he had dishonoured. Pope John XVII. pursued the same licentious course, and also perished under the hand of an avenging husband. Benedict IX. led such a scandalous life that he outraged even the too tolerant laxity of the Roman citizens, and was expelled the city. Clement V. lived in concubinage with his own relative, the Countess of Perigord. Paul III. was a Sodomite. Pope Sixtus IV., the founder of the Inquisition, and who is reported to have died of venereal disease, opened brothels in Rome, which produced an annual income of 20,000 ducats, which went to help to support the luxurious lechery of your most holy Christian Church. It was the same Pope who, in reply to the petition of Cardinals Robere, Riario, and San Lucas, requesting that Sodomy might be permitted in Rome during the warm months of June, July, and August, wrote on the margin of the petition, " Let it be so. " And as to Alexander VI., the Borgia, what thinks your Eminence of him as a specimen of the fruit of your Christian teaching ? He lived in concubinage with a young girl called Catalina Vanoci : by her he had several sons and one daughter, the infamous Lucretia. Lucretia became the concubine of her own

father, the Pope of Rome and vicegerent of God, and cohabited with her own brothers, Luigi and Cæsar.

This holy father-in-God—and father and more of Lucretia—died of poison which he had himself prepared for three Cardinals, and which he took in mistake. We learn from Burnet's exposition that indulgence in unnatural lusts was so prevalent among ecclesiastics that St. Bernard, in a sermon preached to the clergy of "noble and Christian France," affirmed Sodomy to be so common in his time that bishops Sodomised with other bishops! What think ye of this, your Eminence? Have I shown you sufficient specimens of the fruit of your Roman Catholic education? If I have not, say so, and I will show you more. Give us, who believe in secular education, a fair chance; give our system some fifteen centuries, as yours has had, and see whether we will not produce better fruit. One thing is certain: we can hardly produce worse.

Your "religious education," my Lord Cardinal, but for influences which were non-Christian—nay, anti-Christian—would have blotted out forever all the learning that the past centuries of the world had accumulated. While your Church was piously and laboriously discussing such problems as Was Adam's faeces before the Fall malodorous? How many angels at a time can stand on the point of a needle? the learning which dead Greece had left, the learning which mighty Rome had bequeathed to the world as she herself crashed and crumbled into ruin, was trodden under the brute hoofs of your Christian Church, but taken up and cherished as a priceless boon by the followers of the Prophet of Islam, whom your Church despised and hated. "All the knowledge of mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and philosophy, propagated in Europe from the tenth century onward, was derived principally from the schools and books of the Arabians in Italy and Spain."* "Mere human learning," as your Christianity contemptuously called it, owed its salvation from extinction to the persecuted and detested Saracen.

No, your Eminence; learning never did flourish

* Mosheim, vol. ii., p. 194.

under Christian auspices ; and she only dares to partially assert herself now because Christianity is rent and shattered and half-dead, and where she could once bury the Albigenian heresy under a million of bloody corpses she is now impotent to break and silence a bitter pen like mine. Learning was never at all in the line of the followers of your uneducated carpenter and his illiterate fishermen. Your creed, my Lord Cardinal, was hatched in the nest of Ignorance, and only on the dunghill of Ignorance can it thrive. Learning, I repeat, was never in the Christian line ; but, to cheer and encourage your Eminence, I will tell you what *was* in the Christian line. From accounts of the Council of Pavia we find that horses and hawks and gambling and harlots and drunkenness were very much in the Christian line, and very conspicuously distinguished the Christian priesthood. And as for the sanctity of woman, your Church conserved it as such a sacred trust that the same Council remarks of your religious houses : " They seem to be rather brothels than monasteries." From accounts of the Council of Mayence—and, remember, the accounts of these Councils were not written by wicked Infidels, but by devout Catholics—it is candidly remarked that " some priests, cohabiting with their own sisters, have had children by them." How to make convents into brothels, and how to have children by their own sisters, was the kind of learning your priesthood cultivated when they were not deep in absorbing studies as to the exact odour of prelapsarian excrementum, whether Adam, having had no mother, had a navel, and the precise number of angels that could stand on the point of a needle.

One other branch of "religious education" was particularly in the Christian line ; and, in this branch, the Christians left the Saracens and all other pagans far behind. This branch of a "religious education" in which your Church so greatly excelled was *Hatred*. The Christians could hate each other more bitterly, and persecute each other more cruelly, than any other religionists on the face of the earth, and their ancient excellence in this department of polite learning is not yet entirely lost. It was, as you are no doubt aware, the common proverb

of the pagans, "*No wild beasts are so hostile to men as are Christian sects to one another.*" No one save rival Christians ever drenched the fields of the earth with blood over a diphthong,* or ever flew at each other's throats over such hair-breadth twaddle as the difference between *Filioque* and no *Filioque*, till the Christian Church was permanently rent into two sections, the Latin and the Greek. We have seen the results of "religious education" when your Church had the power. These things were done in the green tree; we shall take care they are not done in the dry.

Is your Eminence aware that in 1861 (before the institution of the School Board which you deplore), of persons sent to prison, $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. were under 16 years of age. In 1870 7 per cent. were under 16. In 1884 only 3 per cent., and this 3 per cent. has been found to consist almost entirely of children who have managed to elude attendance at school. So much for the abhorred School Board and the diminution of criminality; but, then, criminality and devotion to your Church go together; and thus it is that you practically lament that crime is on the decline. Statistics show with inexorable clearness that, out of all proportion to their numerical efficiency outside, the inmates of our prisons are Roman Catholics. With Superstition and Ignorance you always must have Crime; but, then, without Superstition and Ignorance you cannot have Christianity, and, of course, from a priest's point of view, better have Crime with Catholicism than throw over Catholicism to get rid of Crime.

Before the Education Act of 1870, which is so detestable to your Eminence, the so-called National Schools were, as a judicious writer remarks, only so in name, and they were administered by one religious denomination, being therefore under the control of its sectarian influence, while also supplying instruction to a comparatively small number of children. The remainder were to be found in the Dame Schools, British and Ragged Schools, and the Voluntary Schools of various denominations. But

* I refer to the dispute between the *Homoousians* and *Homoi-ousians*.

what of the larger residue? They were running about the streets; they were ignorant and uncared for, except at the hands of noble philanthropists, like the late Lord Shaftesbury and his colleagues. Imbibing the instincts of idleness and crime, without a counteracting check, they sapped the healthy life of the growing generation. Crime among the juvenile classes had grown to such an extent that in 1870 no less than 9,998 children were committed to prison for a variety of offences. Over all educational facilities for their improvement the State possessed no control, excepting where schools were subject to Government inspection as the condition of receiving grants of public money.

And, in the incontrovertible words of another writer, "the Board Schools have through good and evil report sown the seeds of a new era. The children who go back to the slums from the Board Schools are themselves quietly accomplishing more than Acts of Parliament, missions, and philanthropic crusades can ever hope to do. Already the young race of mothers, the girls who had the benefit for a year or two of the Education Act, are tidy in their persons, clean in their homes, and decent in their language. Let the reader who wishes to judge for himself of the physical and moral results which education has already accomplished go to any Board School recruited from the 'slum' districts, and note the difference in the older and younger children; or attend a Board meeting, where the mothers come to plead excuses for their little ones' non-attendance, and mark the difference between the old and young mothers, between those who, before they took 'mates' or husbands, had a year or two of school training, and those who had given birth to children in the old days of widespread ignorance." But all this indisputable improvement of the social, moral, and intellectual condition of the masses is, of course, to your Eminence, only a cold and comfortless fact, seeing that your theological absurdities are being neglected, and stubborn knees are being trained that will not genuflect to crosses and relics; manly voices being trained, but not to whine your litanies; and above all, breeches pockets being plenished which will not disgorge their contents for penance and purgatorial fees for vest-

ments and images and candle-sticks and altars and painted glass and mummery.

My Lord Cardinal, it is a simulation and a mockery for you to speak about education at all. As a Cardinal of the Romish Church, your comments upon education are about as valuable as would be those of Satan upon holy water. It has ever been your aim and policy to murder education; he who murders any person is the last one in the world whose sincerity we should trust in, should he evince a specially anxious affection for the person he had murdered.

I am sorry that the limits of this letter preclude my giving more than the very vaguest outline of the learning (?) of your Christian priesthood and the attitude they have from first to last taken up as regards education. However the exigencies of the time may urge upon you to enunciate your theory to-day, we well know what your attitude has been through all the centuries of your domination. You have ever maintained that the wisdom of man (and, in the name of casuistry, what other wisdom is there?) is foolishness in the sight of God. The unalterable attitude of your faith towards education, about which you now orate, may be summed up in the well-known retort of the infallible Pope, Felix V. A cardinal one day ventured to reproach him for his ignorance, whereupon, with pious bigotry, the pontiff replied: "The Holy Ghost is not an ass, is it? Well, it will inspire me. That is *its* business." You educated, and (because you change not unless when you cannot possibly help it) you would still educate Christendom on the old-fashioned lines of the Holy Ghost. Now, this Holy Ghost may be very well as "the comforter" to devout imbeciles who feel the peristaltic movements of the abdominal viscera, and mistake them for the action of the Holy Spirit. But this Holy Ghost, "the comforter," is no schoolmaster, and this I say to his face; and if he, she, or it have no face, then I say it to its os coccyx, or whatever part of it it is decorous to address.

Your infallible Felix V. sounded the keynote of the devilward march of your hierarchy when, instead of to study, he gave himself up to gluttony and voluptuousness, and where anything like education was

wanted left the matter in the hands, or feet, or tentacula, or some such organs, of the Holy Ghost. And this said Holy Ghost has shirked its business deplorably. It has been as successful in standing to man in the place of education as the other third part of a juggle of a deity has been in redeeming the world. The party that permits me to speak in its name, your Eminence, has had enough of the Holy Ghost as a schoolmaster. We mean to dismiss this ghost, and try some mortal with a degree from an university, or a certificate from a training college. Besides being a schoolmaster, this ghost of yours has figured as a dove, or pigeon. The world will figure better when it sees this pigeon finally baked into a pie and its feet sticking up through the crust. Is this offensive? It is not our time to apologise; it is yours. You first insult our sense and outrage our reason with your divine twaddle and pious balderdash, and then expect us to be deferential and apologetic. Your absurdity and cant is as revolting to the Agnostic as the Agnostic's anti-Christian blasphemy can be to you. Cease to print your inane and insane lunacies, and, of course, we will cease to attack them. But, in the interests of the sanity of our race, in the interests of man's practicable hopes and rational aspirations, insult us no more with the pious legerdemain and divine conjuring tricks of your pulpits; or, with the most savage cat-o'-nine tails that sarcasm can wield, we will lash your rhinoceros hide, O Church, till you will be glad to find even in the depths of hell a refuge from our scourge.

You have heard of the *lex talionis*, your Eminence. Feel it. We are not your friends. We are your enemies to the death. We refuse in the interests of conventional amity to forget your faith's diabolical record of over a thousand years. Rivers of the best blood of Europe have, O Church, been let loose by your sword. They have flowed into a sea of vengeance over which now gather the thunder-clouds that will burst and shatter you. These rivers of human blood flow between us and you; and over them we refuse to reach you any olive branch. The charred bones of Giordano Bruno lie between us and you. The flame that shrivelled up his

majestic brain and heroic heart yet throws its heat upon our "Infidel" cheek, and over these bones—holier than tons of your priestly relics—we swear, by our deathless and relentless hatred of wrong and tyranny, that with you we will hold neither truce nor parley, that our helmet shall never leave our head, that day or night our sword-belt shall never be ungirded till your utter destruction is accomplished and guarantee thereby given that you, O Rome, will curse the world no more.

"Christian education" indeed, your Eminence ! Unless you presumed upon the impenetrable ignorance of your dupes, you would never dare to refer to such a sinister sham and flagitious hypocrisy. I say it deliberately, judicially, and perfectly prepared to take up the gauntlet of any historical student who may challenge me : Christian education has been the curse of Europe. From the very first, Christianity "despised all knowledge that was not useful to salvation."* A great majority of Christians were anxious "to banish all reason and philosophy out of the confines of the Church."† Up to the time when Constantine, the libertine and murderer, took Christianity by the hand, and she found she was in a position to argue with the sword and debate with the heading-axe, she took no further pains to discipline herself in what she contemptuously called mere human learning. Formerly a section of the Christian priesthood had taken some interest in such learning, in order to be able to argue with the Pagan ; but the Christian was able now to argue with the Pagan in a far different fashion—with the dungeon and the stake, and accordingly "the liberal arts and sciences and polite literature fell into a declining condition."‡ This Christian bigotry and murderous persecution asserted itself till, in the words of Moshiem,§ "learning was almost extinct ; only a faint shadow of it remained." Philosophy was persistently neglected, for, writes Moshiem, "nearly all supposed that religious persons could do very well without it, or, rather, ought never to meddle with it."

I could go on interminably, your Eminence, in demon-

* "Decline and Fall," chap. xv. † "Mosheim," vol. i., p. 148.

‡ "Jortin," vol. ii., p. 212. § Vol. i., p. 359.

strating that your Church not only utterly neglected "worldly learning," but that it assumed to it an attitude of actual hostility; but I presume that even you, with your faculty for pious romancing will not pretend there is any way of rebutting the charge in this respect; so, turning from your neglect of and hostility to "mere human learning," I shall briefly revert to the "religious education" which you have inculcated for fifteen centuries, and which you teach to-day. You want the education of the children of this our England to be in your hands. You teach that these children must be baptised, or that they will be damned. So urgently do you contend for this barbarous hocus-pocus of baptism that, if the mother be likely to die while she is in a state of pregnancy, she must be cut up alive so that the foetus may be extracted alive and baptised to obviate its spending an eternity in fire and brimstone. The sweetness and delicacy of this doctrine is as conspicuous as its loving kindness of the fiery sort that demonstrates itself in never-dying worms and inextinguishable flames. This, your Eminence, teaches us the incalculable importance of a few drops of water at the right time, and the ineffective impotence of the whole Pacific at, say, five seconds subsequent to the right time. It also teaches us how profound are the divine mysteries of a "religious education."

One beauty of belonging to your Church, your Eminence, is exceedingly solacing and comforting, and that is, that you and your fellow Catholics will be saved, and that all the rest of the world will be damned; for I find, from your "Ordo Administrandi Sacramenti," that outside "the true Catholic Faith" "no one can be saved." Of course, this is quite certain. It is also very modest; there is not a vestige of blasphemous cheek about it. The whole world has been "created" for the purpose of being roasted for ever and ever, to afford amusement to the handful of Catholics who will sit up aloft in heaven looking down upon the agony wriggle of the infernal pit. The inhabitants of the globe have been estimated at 1,000,000,000, and the Catholics amount to only 160,000,000. Heaven will be the dress-circle, and Hell will be the stage; and those on the stage, amusing those in the dress-circle, dancing an agony break-

down, and footing the fiery jig of the damned, will be out of all proportion to the mere handful of privileged Papists, wearing crowns, waving wings, thumbing harps, and looking on. This doctrine is as humble as it is humane, and gives us a divine insight into the glories of a "religious education." It must be so gratifying to a true Catholic to see his Protestant wife in endless torment. She was loving and true and noble. She bore him sons and daughters. In poverty, distress, and sickness she stood by him with that self-denying and heroic tenderness with which woman alone is gifted. She was the wife of his bosom; but now, in hell, she leaps into the embrace of devils. All this because she could accept the Tweedledum of Consubstantiation, but not the Tweedledee of Transubstantiation. For this "thou art comforted" and she is "tormented." So much for the unspeakable happiness of "religious education." I am only an "Infidel," and only imperfectly appreciate it. In fact, honesty impels me to make the impious admission that I desire to be with my wife and children wherever they are. I wish to be with them, whether they be in Heaven, Hell, or Annihilation.

The "religious education" of your Eminence implies subscription to the creed that, "in the most holy Sacraments of the Eucharist, there are truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that there is made a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood."* After you have eaten a slice of this God who made the earth and then came down to it as a joiner and made wheelbarrows, your "religious education" advises those who have eaten hocus-pocussed God-and-joiner to pray as follows: "May thy body, O Lord, which I have received, and thy blood which I have drank, *cleave to my bowels*, and grant that no stain of sin may remain in me who have been fed with this pure and holy sacrament."† If I could humbly 'presume to comment on a mystery so sacred, I should reverently

* "Ordo Ministrandi Sacramenti."

† "Missal for the Use of the Laity," p. 30.

observe that, after you have eaten a world-maker and wielder of a jack-plane, there is little wonder if he should "cleave" to your "bowels," that you should be afflicted with divine constipation ; but I should, with therapeutic piety, suggest that you work off the god with Glauber salts and the joiner with jalap. Is this blasphemous, your Eminence ? It is infinitely less blasphemous than your missal. Mine is a drastic attempt to make men sane; yours is an insidious attempt, in the interests of priestcraft, to keep men cross-signing and genuflecting idiots.

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