

# Modernism and Modern Thought

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Of the following lectures some were delivered in Farm Street Church, some in the Westminster Cathedral, in the spring of the present year. They make no pretence of any profound or exhaustive treatment of their subject. They were addressed to a popular audience, and the subject was therefore handled in popular fashion. It is one which is much discussed by the general public at the present day, often with little real knowledge of its significance. The object of these lectures was to supply Catholics with as much information about Modernism as they need for their instruction and warning.

J.M.B.  
FEAST OF ST IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA.

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# Modernism and Modern Thought

## Lecture I

### Modernism and Kant

SOME apology may perhaps be needed to a Catholic audience for discussing the subject of Modernism at all. It might be thought that it is a topic which might well be let alone – let severely alone – in an English Catholic pulpit. The system that has come to be known as Modernism is so largely a matter of metaphysical speculation that it hardly commends itself to the average English intelligence. We flatter ourselves as a race on being practical. We like to be practical in our religion as in other things, and speculative theories on religious subjects possess little charm for our minds and exercise little influence on our beliefs and conduct. It might be thought, then, that Modernism presents little danger to English Catholics. There is some truth in this view if we regard only the actual tenets of Modernism. No doubt we Englishmen are plain men in our habits of thinking, and to plain men much of the teaching of Modernism is simply bewildering. But underlying the doctrines of Modernism there is the spirit of Modernism. The doctrines of Modernism may not be a danger to us, the spirit of Modernism may. And it cannot be denied, I think, that the spirit of Modernism is abroad at the present time. It infects much of the thought and literature of the day. Catholics need then to be put on their guard against it, and these lectures will have fulfilled their purpose if they serve to warn Catholics against a real danger to their faith. It may be said with truth that the term Modernism stands not so much for a cut-and-dried system ready-made as for a system in the making. It represents a spirit, a tendency, a method or process of contemporary thought. As such, it is not confined to religion alone. The name Modernism, it has been pointed out,<sup>111</sup> bears the same relation to what is modern that liberalism bears to what is liberal, or militarism to what is military, or capitalism to capital, and appropriately enough describes the spirit which exalts the modern at the expense of antiquity, which extols the new because it is new, and depreciates the old because it is old, and which, so far, is a revolt of the present against the past. It does not need any very close observation to perceive that spirit at work at the present day in other spheres besides that of religion, and in other forms of religion besides the Catholic. Its effect on Catholicity is all we are concerned with.

Even when its scope is thus restricted, Modernism is an elusive thing to deal with. For Modernists differ so much among themselves that it is difficult to pin them down to one coherent set of opinions. But the general drift of Modernism in its bearing upon Catholicity is unmistakable. Its object is quite clear and open and avowed. That object is not ostensibly to set up a brand-new form of Catholicity, but to reconstruct the old on new lines. Its object, as Modernists are fond of saying, is to readjust Catholicity to the mentality of the age, to reinterpret Catholicity in terms of modern thought. That sounds at first a perfectly legitimate proposal. But the question is, what modern thought? There is

modern thought and modern thought. There is modern thought which is sound, and modern thought which is, to say the least, unsound. So, when it is proposed to adapt Catholicity to modern thought, it is of some importance to inquire what modern thought is meant. Modern thought is itself a vague term. For our present purpose we may take it to mean the opinions upon serious subjects current among thinking people at the present day, the prevailing mental outlook as regards such subjects, the modern point of view. Now, if there be, as the term modern thought implies there is, some tone or temper of mind upon such subjects peculiar to the present time, if there be a distinct wave of thought passing over our own age, it must have had some definite origin, and it ought to be possible to trace it to its source. To try to do so will help us the better to determine what value to attach to what is vaguely called modern thought. You know what usually happens before a particular set of views or opinions gains ground and spreads so widely as to help to mould the thought of the day. What commonly happens is something like this. Some man of genius, student, thinker, scholar, philosopher, scientist – call him what you please – works out some theory in the privacy of his study or laboratory, and then gives it to the world. At first perhaps it is understood and appreciated only by the few, his fellow-workers in the same field of knowledge. They recognise its merit at once. They are quick to see its bearings and applications. They help to make it known. It was some scientific or philosophical theory to begin with, but it comes to be translated from technical into popular language; it is made easy of popular access. Through the facilities which modern civilisation affords in such abundance, through the newspaper and periodical Press, through such agencies as free libraries, popular lectures, working men's institutes, continuation classes, and the rest, it filters down gradually through the strata of which society is composed. It is popularised. It was at first the creation of one brain, and then the possession of the few. Now it is the property of the many; it is common property. It has passed from the study into the street; it has become part of the thought and speech of the crowd. Henceforth it belongs to modern thought, though many of those whose minds it has helped to form hardly know the name of a Copernicus, or a Galileo, or a Kepler, or a Newton, or a Faraday, or a Harvey, to whom they owe it. What has come to be modern thought may be the product of the brain of one man.

If this be true of the material of thought, of the things that men think about, it may be equally true of the process of thought itself, of habits and modes of thought. And when this is borne in mind it does not seem far-fetched to say that the modern way of thinking about the deeper problems of life is largely influenced by one thinker who lived and taught a hundred years ago. If you ask those most likely to know whom they consider to be the one man who has left the deepest impress upon serious modern thought, nine out of every ten so asked will probably answer, Immanuel Kant. The tenth might say Hegel. But Hegel, it must be remembered, derived his inspiration from Kant. Kant's was the master mind. "Thinking men to-day," says Auguste Sabatier, "may be divided into two classes: those who go back beyond Kant and those who have received, as it were, their philosophic initiation and baptism from his Critique."<sup>121</sup>

And, as a matter of fact, Kant's influence is clearly discernible in modern thought. Kant is a rationalist, and modern thought is largely rationalistic. Kant, though he does not deny the supernatural, puts it outside the field of knowledge, and modern thought is agnostic,

so far as the supernatural is concerned. Kant makes religion a matter of inward, personal experience, independent of any external authority, and modern thought is impatient of authority. Of course, the human mind, whether ancient or modern, has a natural tendency in these directions, irrespective of the teaching of Kant, or of anyone else; but that only makes it a more congenial soil for the reception and fertilisation of Kantian ideas. And, when these ideas spread from the learned to the simple and are diffused and popularised in the manner just indicated, they are of the very kind to shape and fashion the modern mind already predisposed in their favour. Moreover, they give some sort of scientific and philosophic sanction to certain natural leanings of the human mind, and impart to them an air of respectability they might not otherwise possess. And the result is modern thought, modern thought coloured by the philosophy of Kant, even in the case of many who have never studied philosophy, and perhaps have never heard Kant's name. The Catholic Church is far-seeing in watching with vigilance the development not only of theological, but also of philosophical opinions. Philosophy, after all, is only the pursuit of the first principles of knowledge. If the first principles are unsound, the whole field of knowledge, sacred and profane, is rendered insecure, not for the philosopher only, but also for the man in the street.

When there is question, then, of interpreting Catholicity in terms of modern thought, we must be on our guard. Modern thought, it has been said, thanks in great measure to Kant, is largely rationalistic. It is a difficult matter to interpret Catholicity in terms of rationalism. Modernism has the hardihood to attempt the task. And herein lies its chief danger. If a religious system is frankly and exclusively rationalistic, ordinary religious-minded men will not give it a moment's consideration. But if it claims to teach the old doctrines, while accepting all the results of modern criticism and research, thus harmonising the old and the new; if it maintains that, to achieve this end, all that is required is not the destruction but the reinterpretation of the old formulas of belief, it is more likely to ensnare the thoughtful among religious people. And if, moreover, while doing this, it claims to make religion more spiritual, more personal, by making it more a matter of inward spiritual experience, by developing its mystical side, it is more likely to ensnare the devout.

But the question is, can it be done? That Catholicity can be reconciled with all that is sound in modern thought cannot be doubted. But the question is, can it be reconciled with that form of modern thought which is imbued with the teaching of Kant, and consequently tainted with rationalism? That such is the question at issue will appear more plainly as we proceed. We said at the beginning that the danger of Modernism lies not so much in its actual teaching as in its spirit. The spirit of Modernism, we shall have to show, is the rationalistic spirit of Kant. But Modernism is not only an attempt to accommodate Catholicity to modern thought as infected with Kant's spirit. It is an attempt to accommodate Catholicity to Kant's very system. For Modernism is based on Kant's system of philosophy.

And here may I crave your indulgence while I say just so much about the philosophy of Kant as is necessary to render our subject intelligible. This is neither the time nor place to discuss Kant's philosophy as a whole. All we are concerned with is Kant's theory of

knowledge. And, for obvious reasons, that can be dealt with only in brief and summary fashion. But that will suffice to show its bearing on our subject. Kant, then, in his "Critique of Pure Reason," lays down this principle, that the human mind cannot have true knowledge of anything but the data of sense experience. In other words, what our senses have no direct experience of, that our mind cannot know. But our senses have direct experience of objects of sense alone, of what we see, and hear, and touch, and taste, and smell. Therefore, these phenomena, as Kant would call them, are all we can know. They, and they alone, are the raw material of knowledge, to be shaped and fashioned into the finished product of knowledge by the action of the senses and the mind, through the medium of "sense forms" and "mind forms," an action that is purely subjective, that is to say, due to the machinery of the mind itself. Phenomena, appearances, then, according to Kant, are all we know. But are appearances all there is? Is there no reality underneath the appearances? There may be, Kant would say. There may be beneath the phenomena what he calls a "noumenon," a thing in itself. And the human mind may surmise its existence. Nay, the mind may go further. It may prompt a man to act for all practical purposes as if that thing did really exist. The mind may hold its existence as a "regulative principle of conduct," as a "practical postulate of reason." But, for all that, the mind cannot know its existence. Why not? Because that thing, that reality, is not matter of the experience of the senses. And Kant's theory of knowledge limits rigidly knowledge properly so-called to the data of sense experience. Knowledge, cannot transcend experience, is Kant's dictum. And therefore knowledge cannot penetrate to things. Knowledge of phenomena does not help it to do so. For that knowledge neither proves the existence nor manifests the nature of the thing in itself. It is only the product of the machinery of our own mind.

Now, a theory like this seems at first sight repugnant to common sense. For example, I am standing on the platform of a railway station and an express runs through. To say that I know nothing about the train but what meets the senses – the rush of air, or of steam, the roar, the bustle, the speed, the flash of the lights, the rattle of the cars on the metals, the whistle of the engine – seems at first preposterous. But that is hardly a fair and adequate presentment of Kant's theory. That theory is not so easily disposed of. It would be a mistake, a mistake sometimes made, I think, by Catholic opponents of Kant, to travesty Kant's system and then hold it up to ridicule. It is easy to ridicule it, but it needs to be met. Kant was a serious thinker, and, notwithstanding his errors, he was a deep and original thinker. And here we must remember he is occupied with a problem which has baffled some of the acutest intellects the world has ever seen, the problem of what we know and how we know it. That is a question that cannot be settled off-hand. We are not presuming to settle it now. We are only concerned to point out a mistake made by Kant in dealing with it. In working out his theory of cognition, Kant took this as his starting-point: that the laws by which the human mind works render it incapable of knowing with true intellectual knowledge anything beyond the data of sense experience. That was a false start and it vitiated Kant's whole system.

In contra-distinction to Kant's philosophy there is what we may call Catholic philosophy. Catholic philosophy agrees with Kant in saying that knowledge must have sense experience for its basis. There can be nothing in the intellect that has not come directly or

indirectly through the senses. Catholic philosophy agrees with Kant then in holding that knowledge begins with the experience of the senses. It differs from Kant in saying that it does not end there. Catholic philosophy holds that the mind recognises that the objects presented to the senses are real things, and that its knowledge regarding them is true knowledge. Opinions may differ as to the process, but all Catholic philosophy is agreed as to the fact.

To sum up, Kant would say: we know phenomena only and, as to the thing itself, at most we can only surmise its existence as occasioning the phenomena we know. Catholic philosophy would say: we know the phenomena and through the phenomena we know the thing; for the phenomena are not the creations of our senses, but the thing itself as manifest to us. The bearing upon faith of this theory of Kant is obvious at once. Kant maintains that the human intellect knows phenomena, appearances alone. But God and the things of God, the supernatural truths of faith, are not appearances. "Faith is the evidence of things that appear not" (Heb. ii. i). Are we to say that God and the things of God are incapable of being known by us? St Paul told the Romans that "the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, His eternal power also, and divinity" (Rom. i. 20). Are we to say that the invisible things of God cannot be clearly seen, cannot be understood by the things that are made? Certainly, say the more thorough-going disciples of Kant. These things are unknowable. And God Himself is the Great Unknowable, the Great Unknown. So spoke that disciple of Kant, Herbert Spencer, the agnostic. And at first sight it would certainly seem that in speaking thus Herbert Spencer was following out the premisses of Kant to their logical conclusion. At first sight the logical conclusion of Kant's system would seem to be agnosticism. But Kant, to do him justice, was not minded to be an agnostic in the strict sense. Kant was what is called in Germany a Pietist, what we should call in England perhaps an evangelical of the Methodist type. But Kant's premisses seemed to lead to agnosticism. Then he must devise some way of escape from such a conclusion. And the way of escape he devised was this. It is true, he said, that God cannot be known by the intellect. That is all I maintain. But we have another faculty by which God can be attained. That other faculty Kant called the Practical Reason. And so we have Kant's "Critique of Practical Reason" to supplement his "Critique of Pure Reason." Our pure reason, Kant said, our speculative reason, cannot indeed attain to God and the supernatural, but our practical reason can. For our practical reason postulates God as the basis of the moral order. So far our practical reason reveals to us the need of God and bids us tend to Him as our Ideal. And so by our practical reason we can be brought into touch with God, though by pure reason we cannot.

This much it was necessary to say of the philosophy of Kant – perhaps I should apologise for saying so much – as a preliminary to showing that Modernism is founded on Kant's system. Something has been said already about the influence of Kant on those who came after him. That influence may be truly said to have been enormous. He is held to have done much to solve the problem of knowledge which had puzzled thinkers like Descartes, and Spinoza, and Locke, and Berkeley, and Hume. The systems of Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, even though they differ from Kant's, owe much to his. Men as widely different in their views as Goethe, John Paul Richter, von Humboldt, Strauss,

Renan, and, in our country, Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Huxley, Thomas Carlyle, show traces of his influence. We catch echoes of his teaching even in poetry, in the poems of Schiller in Kant's native land, in the poems of Tennyson in our own. Some of you may remember the lines in Tennyson's "In Memoriam": "We have but faith, we cannot know, For knowledge is of things we see." That is a poetical rendering of Kant's dictum that knowledge is confined to phenomena. And, like so many others, the Modernists, as will be seen in the sequel, have fallen under the spell of Kant. It is not surprising then that their effort to reconcile Catholicity with modern thought should start with an attempt to reconcile Catholic faith with Kant's theory of knowledge.® How that attempt was made, and with what success, we shall hope to show in the following lectures.

{1} "Benigni in Miscellanea," January, 1904.

{2} Auguste Sabatier, "Esquisse," p. 359.

{3} See "Mediaevalism," Tyrrell, p. 110, where the writer, though he labours to show that his theory is not derived from Kant, does not deny that it is the same as Kant's. Cp. "Risposta all' Enciclica," p. 99: "The concepts which served as a basis for these arguments (the arguments by which scholastics prove the possibility of our knowledge of God) have lost, owing to the labours of post-Kantian criticism, the character of absolute truth which the Aristotelians of the Middle Ages attributed to them," and p. 75, "We adhere to the Critique of Pure Reason of Kant and Spencer."

## Lecture II

### Modernism and Catholicism

THERE is a striking passage in the life of a great scientist of our own country, Clerk Maxwell. He is known to many of you, I dare say, as a former distinguished Professor of Physics at Cambridge University, and as the great authority on electromagnetism, and the originator of the electro-magnetic theory of light. He was a scientific man of the first rank, and at the same time a deeply religious man. In the year 1876 the then Anglican Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol – the well-known Dr Ellicott – had occasion to write to Maxwell upon the question of reconciling the teaching of science with the teaching of Genesis, and the answer given by Maxwell in substance amounted to this: People are fond of talking of the latest result of science, when what they mean is often a purely conjectural hypothesis. These hypotheses are constantly changing, and I advise you not to pin your interpretation of Genesis to a conjectural hypothesis of this kind, as the science of 1896 may not agree with the science of 1876. Maxwell's meaning was plain enough. The so-called latest result of science is often only a working theory, good for today, but liable to be rejected to-morrow in favour of one that works better. If the interpretation of Scripture is based upon a working theory of the moment, when that working theory has gone, what becomes of Scripture? Is that to go too? Scientific theories pass, but Holy Scripture remains. Let us be sure that the science we are trying to reconcile with faith is not merely some temporary scientific expedient. That is a caution Modernists would have

done well to bear in mind. It might have deterred them from the attempt which, we said in our last lecture is made by Modernism to reconcile Catholicism with Kant's theory of knowledge. That attempt we have now to consider.

We have seen something already of what Kant's teaching is. We may remind ourselves now of what Catholic teaching is. We shall then be in a better position to judge of this attempt to harmonise the two. In what I have to say I am not undertaking to prove the truth of the Catholic conception of Christianity; I propose to state it only, and, briefly stated, it comes to this.

It is a fact, an event of history, that God the Son took flesh of a virgin mother, and was made man, the God-Man, Whom we know as Jesus Christ. It is a fact that He first delivered His doctrine by word of mouth to His Apostles, and that they' delivered it also by word of mouth to the body of believers. That is Revelation, as Catholics understand it. Revelation, then – observe we are speaking now not of private revelations, like those vouchsafed to prophets under the old law, or to saints under the new, but of public revelation – is something external. In its effect it is of course internal, enlightening the mind within. But in its origin it is from without, transmitted by oral communication from Christ, and from those commissioned to speak in Christ's name: "He that heareth you heareth me." So much as to Revelation. In the next place, it is a fact that the believers in this revelation were constituted by Christ Himself into a body which He called the Church. To that Church He gave a form of government which we call hierarchical, that is the sacred rule of the priesthood; a government not democratic but hierarchical, with Peter and Peter's successors at its head, as supreme teachers of Christ's truth, and supreme rulers with the powers requisite to support their teaching. That is the Church, as Catholics – understand it.

Once more, the doctrines which Christ revealed, either directly or through the Church, were in many cases truths superior to reason, beyond the power of reason to discover, and, when discovered by other means, beyond the power of reason to comprehend. It would not be difficult to show that, to believe such supernatural truths as they should be believed, with saving belief, supernatural aid is required. That supernatural aid we call the gift of Faith. Faith, then, is a supernatural gift of God for the acquisition of truth in the supernatural order, just as reason is a natural gift of God for the acquisition of truth in the natural order. That is Faith, as Catholics understand it.

Again, as these supernatural truths of faith are proposed to me by the Church, if I am to believe at all, I must believe them on the word of God, of course, but on the word of God made known to me by the Church. For, if I want to know a truth, and cannot get to know it by the use of my own reason, and yet the truth is there, there is only one way in which it can be made known to me – somebody must tell me. And Christ has appointed the Church to tell me. But to believe because somebody tells me is to believe on authority. Hence the need of authority in matters of Faith. And that is Church Authority, as Catholics understand it.



Further, if the Church is to tell me these truths so that I may believe them, then the Church must speak plainly. For, if the Church is not clear in her statements, how am I to be clear in my belief? The Church must formulate her doctrine in language clear and definite and precise, And truths so formulated are what are termed Dogmas. That is Dogmatic teaching, as Catholics understand it.

Here we have clear notions upon such points as Revelation, the Church, Faith, Authority, Dogma. And, taken together, these constitute a summary, brief and incomplete, but correct so far as it goes, of Christianity, as Catholics understand it. This, then, is the Catholic conception of Christianity.

Now Modernism undertakes to reconcile Catholic Christianity with modern thought. Well and good. If Modernism is to do that, the Christianity just described is what it has got to reconcile with modern thought. Let us see how Modernism sets about it.

In the first place, the Modernist begins with a philosophical assumption which those who have followed the last lecture will have no difficulty in recognising. That assumption is that all we know with intellectual knowledge is not reality, but only appearances. Phenomena we know – the Modernist says – but as to things, those we do not know, and cannot. That, as we saw in our last lecture, is the philosophy of Kant, pure and simple. And what follows from this, as was said then, is that we cannot know with intellectual knowledge God and the supernatural. So far the Modernist agrees with Kant.® But he agrees with him also in saying that we have another means of reaching God and the supernatural. Kant calls that other means the Practical Reason. The Modernist prefers to call it the Religious Sentiment, or Religious Experience.® And the Modernist argues in this wise: "Man, he says, feels within himself instinctively the need of the Divine. That need of the Divine excites in him a corresponding sentiment, a sentiment described by one of the Modernists as 'the ceaseless palpitation of the human soul panting for the Divine' (Buisson). That sentiment is the Religious Sentiment, and is God revealing himself to the soul of the man. Thus considered, that Religious Sentiment is Revelation. Further, the Religious Sentiment unites the soul with God, it is an 'inward recognition of God, a response of spirit to spirit.'® Thus considered, the Religious Sentiment is Faith."

Here, then, we have Revelation and Faith, as Modernists understand them, and observe the contrast with the Catholic notions of Revelation and Faith, as just described, In the Catholic sense, Revelation is something external, something that comes to the soul from without, from the oral teaching of Christ and the Church, and Faith is acceptance of that Revelation. In the Modernist sense, Revelation is wholly internal, a psychological experience, and Faith is the soul's response to it. To the Catholic, Revelation is statement, and Faith is belief in the statement made. To the Modernist, Revelation and Faith are experience.® To the Catholic, the content of Revelation, which is the object of Faith, is truth addressed to the intelligence. To the Modernist, it is truth addressed to the feelings, to the emotional faculty. That brings religion perilously near to Matthew Arnold's definition of religion: "Morality touched with emotion."

Again – the Modernist proceeds – God thus apprehended by the religious sentiment, is indwelling, immanent in the soul, and this doctrine of God indwelling in the soul and apprehended as revealing Himself to the soul, not by means of any external teaching, but through the soul's inward experience, is the Modernist doctrine of Vital Immanence.® Here we recognise Kant's influence again. It is true that theories of immanence are older than Kant. In one form or another they are as old as philosophy itself, as old as the Stoics, at least. And there is a theory of immanence which is true.® But Kant's was a false theory of immanence, and the Vital Immanence of the Modernists is derived from that.®

We have seen what the Modernist understands by Revelation and Faith. They depend upon Vital Immanence, and are reducible to Religious Experience. Now it is natural that a man should wish to give some account to himself of his religious experience, that he should wish to interpret it to himself, to translate his religious experience into words. And for this purpose his reason begins to work upon his religious sentiment. So the Modernist is able to say that his religion is not a mere matter of sentiment, but of reason as well. The Modernist then brings his reason to bear upon the religious sentiment, and tries to express in language his religious experience. He admits he can do so only in language very vague and indefinite, 'in terms quite inadequate to express his inner experience, in terms in fact little better than symbols of the religious experience within him, symbols that shift and change and need to be modified as his religious experience undergoes modification. These vague and variable statements are what Modernists call Dogma. They are "tentative and provisional formulas."® Contrast this Dogma of the Modernists with Dogma as understood by the Catholic. To the Catholic, Dogma is something fixed, precise, something stable and immutable; to the Modernist, Dogma is "a tentative and provisional formula." But – the Modernist continues – to the man who believes, it is natural to wish not only to explain his faith to himself, but also to communicate it to others. The Modernist does so by means of the dogmas just described. These dogmas are the outcome of the religious experience of his individual conscience. By communicating these dogmas, he associates his individual conscience with the consciences of others, and this association of individual consciences forms the Collective Conscience. Here we have all the materials ready for the formation of a Church. For people who share in this Collective Conscience are bound together by a spiritual bond of union. It is natural for people so united in thought to form themselves into a society, and that society is the Church, as Modernists understand it,® and a Church, with Church authority, for the authority of that Church is the authority of the collective over the individual conscience. That is what Modernists understand by the Church and Church authority. Contrast that with the Catholic conception of the same. The Catholic says the Church was established by Christ. The Modernist says the Church is the product of the Collective Conscience. It is true he would add that this Collective Conscience was inspired by "the spirit of Christ living and developing in the life of the faithful collectively." !!"; Very well; let us put it that way. The Catholic says the Church is established by Christ directly. The Modernist says it is established by Christ indirectly at most, for it is established by the Collective Conscience inspired by Christ, or by "faith in Christ."® Again, the Catholic says Church authority is centred in the divinely appointed vicar of Christ, Peter and Peter's successors. The Modernist says it is centred in the Collective Conscience. Modernism does not hesitate to say "the entire Christian people is the true and immediate vicar of Christ."®

So the Church, it seems, is not hierarchical, the Church is democratic; democratic in its origin for it is a product of the Collective Conscience, democratic in its constitution, for its authority is that of the Collective Conscience over the individual.<sup>m</sup>

And thus Modernism has reached its goal. It set out to reconcile Catholicity with the spirit of the age, and it has done so with a vengeance. Democracy is the spirit of the age, and the Modernist has succeeded in reconciling the Church with democracy by proving to his own satisfaction that the Church is democratic in its origin, and democratic in its constitution. Modernism set out to reconcile Catholicity with modern thought, and it has done so after a fashion by interpreting Christianity in terms of Kant. It has adopted Kant's theory of knowledge, that we can know phenomena only. It has adopted Kant's theory of religion, that we cannot apprehend God intellectually, but only by some other method, whether you call it Practical Reason or Religious Experience matters little. And by such means it has succeeded in reconciling Catholicity with modern thought, but at what a cost! At the cost of identifying Catholicity with an unsound system of philosophy; at the cost of revolutionising the very notions of things so fundamental to Christianity as Revelation, Faith, the Church, Church Authority, Dogma; at the cost of turning Christianity topsy-turvy. Modernism is "another gospel which is not another." It is the Gospel according to Kant.

{1} "Risposta," p. 103: "Led by the philosophy of science to revise all our empirical ideas, convinced beyond doubt of the conventionality which enters naturally into all our metaphysical concepts of reality, we are unable any longer to accept a demonstration of God which is founded on Aristotelian concepts."

{2} "Quelques Lettres," Loisy, p. 234. "Risposta," pp. 94-100.

{3} "Through Scylla and Charybdis," Tyrrell, p. 305.

{4} *Ibid.*, Tyrrell, pp. 285, 287 305, etc.

{5} "Simples Réflexions," Loisy, pp. 153-4. "Through Scylla and Charybdis," Tyrrell, pp. 286, 366 *seq.*

{6} Cp. "St Thomas," p. 1, 2ae viii. a. 1.

{7} "Risposta," p. 91.

{8} "Life of Fr. Tyrrell," ii., p. 202.

{9} "Quelques Lettres," Loisy, p. 186. "Through Scylla and Charybdis," Tyrrell, p. 367 *seq.*

{10} "Life of Fr. Tyrrell," ii., p. 218.

{11} "Autour d'un petit livre," Loisy, p. 172.

{12} "Life of Fr. Tyrrell," ii., p. 191.

{13} "Through Scylla and Charybdis," Tyrrell, pp. 381 *seq*

## Lecture III

### Modernism and Jesus Christ

IN our last lecture we compared the Catholic presentment of Christianity with its Modernist presentment. We compared Christianity – as we Catholics know it – in some of its main features, one by one, with corresponding features in the Modernist system: the Catholic notion of revelation with the Modernist notion of revelation; Catholic faith with Modernist faith; the Catholic conceptions of the Church, of Church Authority, of Dogma, with Modernist conceptions of the same. And, putting the two side by side, was ever a more irreducible set of equations? And this was the upshot of the Modernists' attempt to reconcile Christianity with modern thought. Their mistake, as was pointed out, was this. While professing to bring Christianity into harmony with modern thought, what they were really doing was to try to harmonise Christianity with that particular phase of modern thought represented by Kant and his school of philosophy. They started with a philosophical assumption of Kant, an arbitrary assumption, and upon that proceeded to build up their system of Christianity, with the result that might have been foreseen. The result was something that was hardly recognisable as Christianity at all, something they frankly admitted to be not so much a reformation of Christianity as a transformation,<sup>il</sup> not a reform but a revolution,<sup>@</sup> something, in fact, which it was better to call at once a New Theology; which was what its most candid supporters did not hesitate to call it.

It will occur to us at once to ask what was the necessity for this new restatement of the old creed? Why this upsetting of old beliefs, and this shifting of old landmarks, to the disturbance of men's peace in believing? The answer of the Modernists will be – the advance of modern thought has rendered it necessary. Modern thought shows that Christianity cannot be maintained or defended on the old lines. We must remodel it to suit the mentality of the age. We must bring our Christianity up to date. For take Christianity, the Modernist proceeds, as explained in the good old-fashioned way in the last lecture. It was said to have originated in a revelation conveyed by word of mouth to mankind by the God-Man. That is the basis of the whole Christian system then expounded. Upon that basis you found your notions of revelation, faith, the Church, Church authority, dogma, as then stated. If that basis can be shown to be unsound, the whole Christian system, as you conceive it, comes to the ground. But it is unsound. A theory like this was all very well in mediaeval times, in the Dark Ages. But we know better now. Sounder methods of historical and scientific criticism prevail nowadays. The progress of modern thought has taught us that we have no intellectual knowledge of anything but phenomena, that our knowledge does not transcend the facts of experience. But the God-Man is not a fact of experience. Such a Being, then, is incapable of being known by us intellectually. Neither is a supernatural revelation, ascribed to such a Being,

a fact of experience. Therefore such a revelation cannot be matter of intellectual knowledge. You do not know – the Modernist would say – from the nature of the case you cannot know intellectually anything about a God-Man, or a supernatural revelation imparted by Him. What, then, becomes of a Christianity founded upon the hypothesis that you can? Your basis is unsound. Reduce the facts as we know them to their proper proportions, and the facts are these. It is true there existed a Jesus of Nazareth, a man, a prophet, if you like to call Him so, "mighty in word and work." We do not for a moment deny His existence, nor His exceptional holiness of life and purity of doctrine, nor His extraordinary natural powers. These things belong to the realm of phenomena; they are facts of experience, and therefore ascertainable by human knowledge. The facts of experience go to make up history. This Jesus of Nazareth is, then, an historical figure. The Jesus of history I know. But, when you claim supernatural powers for Him, when you speak of Him as possessing supernatural knowledge, as imparting a supernatural revelation, when you talk to me of a Being Who wrought miracles, that is, departures from the laws of nature, of which laws alone I have experience, you are speaking to me of things that transcend my experience, of things outside the realm of phenomena. To be true to my Kantian principles, I must say I have no intellectual knowledge of such things. I simply don't know. But if you ask me how people have come to invest Him with this supernatural character of a God-Man, and claim to know Him thus, I have an explanation ready, and my explanation is this. Let it be remembered, in the first place, that the Jesus of history alone is the object of our knowledge properly so-called. But besides knowledge I have, as already indicated, another faculty, the religious sentiment, which, in so far as it unites me with God, I call faith. Now Jesus of Nazareth may be the object not only of my intellectual knowledge, but also of my faith. As the object of my intellectual knowledge, He is a mere man, a wondrous man indeed, but still a man in the natural order, for knowledge can take cognisance of nothing else. Regarded thus, I call Him the Jesus of history. But, as the object of my faith, He assumes a different character. Faith recognises the Divine in Him, that divine immanence, already mentioned as existing in all believers, but existing in Him in an exceptional degree. Faith gradually expands that divine element in Him, magnifies it, amplifies it, till it transfigures Him completely. Gradually legends gather round about Him, divine powers are attributed to Him, until at last He is crowned with the aureola of divinity, deified.® Is He therefore God? Not to knowledge. Knowledge, remember, takes no cognisance of the supernatural, of the divine. But to faith, in a sense, He is God. He is God not in fact, but in the belief of Christians. Christ the God-Man is a creation of faith. But, thus considered, He is to be carefully distinguished from the Jesus of history.[.itt](#)

Thus far the Modernist. And so we have the historical Jesus, a fact; and the Christ of faith – what are we to call Him? A fact? Yes, in a sense. Not an historical fact, not a fact of experience, but a fact of human consciousness. But what sort of a fact is that? A fact of human consciousness means something that some human consciousness feels or experiences or thinks to be true. If the God-Man Christ is only a fact of human consciousness, He is a Being Whom some men have thought to be God.® But that does not make Him God. Facts of human consciousness may be theories, may be ideas. And so the God-Man Christ may be an idea. The Modernists do not hesitate to call Him so: "the Incorporation of an Idea."® A fact of human consciousness may be a legend, a myth, and

so the God-Man Christ may be a legend, a myth, to be treated with as much respect as other legends, other myths; as an Homeric myth, or a legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. And thus you have the Jesus of history, a fact, and the Christ of faith, a creation of the religious sentiment. The Modernists have done what St John foretold men should do: "they have dissolved Jesus" (1 John iv. 3).

But, if this theory be true, what becomes of the Christian system of revelation? We said in our last lecture that the Christian revelation was external, delivered by Jesus Christ, the God-Man, teaching His doctrine by word of mouth to mankind. But Christ, the God-Man; as Modernists conceive Him, is not a Being outside us delivering a revelation from without. He is immanent in the Christian community, revealing Himself progressively to its faith. The Christ of faith does not speak by word of mouth. The Christ of faith reveals Himself to the religious sentiment within. But it is certain that the immanent Christ, Christ within, never revealed in this manner the Church, its constitution, its authority, dogma, the whole Christian scheme of revelation, as Catholics understand it. No, of course not, the Modernist rejoins. "Faith in Christ never meant merely faith in a teacher and his doctrine, but an apprehension of His personality as revealing itself within us."® But faith in Christ as a teacher, and in His doctrines, is the very basis of Catholic Christianity. On the Modernist showing, this basis is unsound. And, therefore, according to Modernists, the structure raised upon that basis is unsound. The Catholic conception of Christianity comes to the ground, together with the Catholic conception of Christ.® "The Catholic conception of Christ as God," the Modernists tell us, "conveys no more meaning to the mind than the proposition, Christ is x."®

We asked at the beginning, why must the faith of the multitude be disturbed by these new doctrines? And we were told that this was necessary for the purpose of harmonising Christianity with the "latest results of criticism."!® For Modernism, we are told – and this is its official description – "is the effort to find a new theological synthesis consistent with the data of historico-critical research."®! Here in passing let me enter a protest against the glib use of such terms as scientific and unscientific, historical and unhistorical, critical and uncritical, and the rest. Nowadays, if you want to damn an opponent's case beyond all hope of redemption, you have only to label it unscientific or unhistorical or uncritical. It is not necessary to have any clear idea of what these terms mean. They are useful to make an opponent look foolish and ignorant. And so we are told that Catholic Christianity is unscientific and unhistorical and uncritical, because it does not agree with the "latest results of criticism," and the "data of historico-critical research." And here we have got the "latest results of criticism," and the "data of historico-critical research." And what do they amount to? To this: that you cannot know anything but phenomena and the facts of experience. But that is what Kant taught nearly a hundred years ago, and something very like what the Sophists of ancient Greece taught two thousand years before him. Why not say at once that Modernism is the effort to find a new theological synthesis consistent with the philosophy of Kant? So it seems Catholic Christianity is unscientific and unhistorical and uncritical because it does not agree with Kant's theory of knowledge. Now we know where we stand. But was it worth while to disturb men's faith for the sake of telling us something that most people who knew anything about the subject knew already? "Ye senseless Galatians, who hath bewitched

you?" St Paul asked the Galatians (Gal. iii. 1). If that question were put to the Modernists, "Who hath bewitched you?" the answer would have to be, "Immanuel Kant."

The mention of the Sophists of ancient Greece reminds me of two of the old Greek philosophers, Stilpo of Megara, and Crates of Thebes. Crates, meeting Stilpo one day in the street, asked him whether he believed that the gods really cared for man's worship. "Hush!" said Stilpo; "don't ask such questions in public, but in private." The Modernists might learn from that pagan philosopher a lesson of reticence and of consideration for the faith of others. If they wish to bemuse their own minds with sceptical speculation on the most sacred subjects, let them keep it to themselves, and to the privacy of their own studies. Let them leave the minds of others content in their belief.

It was said in our opening lecture that the chief thing to be feared in Modernism is its spirit. In this lecture we have seen what the spirit of Modernism is with reference to the character of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God the Son made man. St John has condemned in advance that spirit in words which might have been expressly intended for the Modernists. Modernism, it has been shown, distinguishes between Jesus and Christ; the Jesus of history, and the Christ of faith. "Every spirit," St John has said, "that dissolveth Jesus, is not of God" (1 John iv. 3). And again: "Who is a liar save him who denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" (1 John ii. 22). The spirit of Modernism, St John would tell us, is a lying spirit. It is not of God.

{11} "Life of Fr. Tyrrell," ii., p. 360.

{2} *Ibid.*, ii., p. 404

{3} "L'Evangile et L'Eglise," Loisy, p. 139. "Through Scylla and Charybdis," Tyrrell, p. 290.

{4} "Simples Réflexions," Loisy, p. 158.

{5} See Fr. Joseph Rickaby, S.J., "The Modernist" C.T.S., p. 30.

{6} Life of Fr. Tyrrell," ii., p. 397.

{7} "Life of Fr. Tyrrell," ii., p. 403.

{8} "The Divine institution of the Church is based on the Divinity of Christ, but the Divinity of Christ is not a fact of history, but a conception of faith." "Autour d'un petit livre," Loisy, p. 162.

{9} Supplement to *Hibbert Journal* 1909. "The Point Issue," by Fr. Tyrrell.

{10} "Life of Fr. Tyrrell," ii., p. 403.



{ 11j *Ibid.*, ii., p. 336.

## Lecture IV

### Modernism and Dogma

#### I. Symbolism

No doubt it surprised and perhaps shocked many of those who followed the last lecture to see how Modernism deals with the Sacred Person of Jesus Christ, our Lord, in distinguishing between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith; the Jesus of history a man and nothing more, the Christ of faith God only in the sense that faith so regards Him. We had always thought that the Jesus of history was God not to faith only, but in fact, Very God of Very God, proved so to be by historical evidence of the strictest kind, by the historical predictions of prophets fulfilled in Him, by the historical testimony of His contemporaries, some of them reluctant witnesses, by His own claim to divinity, a claim substantiated by His acknowledged character for veracity, and by His miracles, to which He Himself pointed in proof of the justice of His claim. "You say to me, thou blasphemest, because I have said I am the Son of God." And by "Son of God" He meant God the Son, else why should the Jews accuse Him of blasphemy in claiming the title? And He continues, If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But, if I do them and ye will not believe Me, believe the works themselves, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in the Father" (St John x. 36). To us, all this evidence of prophecies fulfilled, of eyewitnesses convinced, of Christ's own claim corroborated, is historical evidence, and proves that the Jesus of history was God. How do Modernists dispose of it?

They would begin by saying that what we call historical evidence is not historical evidence at all. Faithful to their Kantian principles, they would say: history is concerned only with facts of experience. What you call history deals not with facts of experience, but with the divine, the supernatural. That is not matter of experience, and, therefore, all so-called evidence of it must be ruled out of court as unhistorical, and therefore inadmissible. This line of argument may be convincing for those who accept Kant's theory of knowledge. Those who do not will say "Whether you call the evidence for the divinity of Christ historical or not, there it is; it has satisfied countless multitudes of Christian believers. Even if you do not accept it, it is a fact that needs some explanation. How do you explain it?" Of course, one simple way is to explain it away altogether, to put it down as so much invention; and the extreme advocates of this method not only treat Christ's claims and miracles as legendary, but question His existence altogether and talk of the Christ myth. Archbishop Whately, in a pamphlet entitled "Historic Doubts respecting Napoleon Bonaparte," once made fun of this controversial method by undertaking to prove that Napoleon never existed. He brought such an array of arguments in support of his thesis and manipulated the facts of history so cleverly, that he seemed almost to make out his case, and, at least, to render it extremely doubtful whether Napoleon himself was not a mythical personage. There are methods by the employment



of which you can disprove the existence of Christ, or of anybody or of anything else you please.

Modernists, of course, do not go to such lengths as this. Their method is more ingenious. They accept all the narratives of the Evangelists; with some reservations perhaps as to St John's gospel, and they accept them as true. But true in what sense? True in the ordinary sense, true to fact, true historically? No, but true in quite another sense; true as a sign or symbol of truth,<sup>11</sup> true as signifying or symbolising what is true, true, not as possessing a fact-value, but as possessing a moral or spiritual value. This being so, it does not matter whether an alleged fact really happened or not, precisely as recorded; whether an alleged word was ever uttered or not, as reported. The historical truth matters little, it is the spiritual truth symbolised that matters. The historical statement is only the husk, the outer, the protective husk,<sup>12</sup> but the spiritual truth it signifies – that is the important thing! That is the kernel which the husk enshrines. Whatever may be said of the historical statement, that spiritual truth -is undeniable, and the historical statement is only convenient symbol of that truth, convenient means of expressing and preserving it. This is certainly a far-reaching method of historical criticism. It may be applied with startling results to all history, sacred and profane. It is applied by Modernists to the whole field of dogmatic belief.

Now I propose to test the worth of this Modernist doctrine of Symbolism. And I propose to do so by applying it in one particular instance, the instance of Christ's resurrection, an instance the more appropriate to our present subject because it is the chief of the miracles wrought by Christ in proof of His divinity. Let us apply this method of symbolism, then, to Christ's resurrection, and see how it works out there.

The ordinary Christian believer holds Christ's resurrection to be an historical fact, a fact attested by those who saw Christ die and saw Him after death in His risen body, a fact attested not only by those predisposed to believe, but by those indisposed, like the doubting Thomas, a fact attested by the ocular testimony of the more than five hundred who, St Paul tells us, saw Him at one and the same time (1 Cor. xv. 6), a fact confirmed by the anxiety of the priests who bribed the guards at the tomb to hush it up (Matt. xxviii. 12), and by the action of the Council of the Sanhedrim in imposing silence on Peter and John when they preached it (Acts iv. 2, 16), a fact, before the event, foretold by our Lord on more than one occasion as a proof of His divine mission (Matt. xvi. 4, John ii. 19), and, after the event, appealed to by St Paul as the one fact by which the whole of Christianity was to stand or fall – "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain" (1 Cor. xv. 17). Here, surely, we are dealing with something which is either fact or fiction, either historical truth or pure fabrication. Call it one or the other. The Modernist seems to call it something between the two.

For he tells us the resurrection of Christ is not true as an historical fact, and yet it is not to be called entirely false; it is true as a symbol. A symbol of what? A symbol of the truth that the "divine personality of Jesus cannot die."<sup>13</sup> But, one is inclined to say, before it can be a symbol it must be shown to be a fact; what about the alleged fact? The Apostles declare that they and others saw Him dead and saw Him afterwards alive. What are we to

say to that? The Modernist answers, "What they saw was a vision, the spontaneous self-embodiment of their faith in Christ's spiritual triumph and resurrection." But, we reply, *they* did not call it a vision. On the contrary, their account expressly precludes any such explanation. "The Lord hath risen *indeed*," they say, "and hath appeared to Simon." Let us suppose for the sake of argument that the appearance to Simon was a vision; the actual resurrection is described as preceding it. The Apostles do not, like the Modernists, confound the resurrection with the vision. They are careful to distinguish between the two: first, the resurrection; then, the appearance to Simon. They describe the resurrection as a reality. "Certainly," is the Modernist's reply, "by all means a reality, but an inward reality. There was no outward reality. The vision was true to an inward reality, the spirit and faith of the beholder. It was determined, not from without, but from within."® The Modernists began by saying that the resurrection was not fact but vision. Now they seem to say: it is not even vision. For, after all, visions, if they deserve the name, suppose some outward reality; they are determined from without, not from within. But this vision of the resurrection, Modernists say, was true only to an inward reality, was determined, not from without, but from within. This reduces the vision to pure imagination. So it seems the resurrection is a symbol of truth founded upon imagination. If so, what is its worth as a symbol? It is worth just as much, or as little, as the imagination is worth on which it is founded. And what is the worth of St Paul's argument, "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain"? We had always thought that to mean, the truth of your faith depends upon the truth of the fact of Christ's resurrection. But it would seem the resurrection is not a fact, but an imagination. So apparently what St Paul meant to say was, your faith depends upon – imagination!

I know the desperate efforts made by Modernists to escape from this conclusion. They would protest they do not call the resurrection imagination. We may admit they do not in so many words. What they do call it is sometimes "prophetic imagery,"® sometimes "apocalyptic imagery."® This is playing with words. "Prophetic imagery" means, I suppose, imagery which forecasts the future, and "apocalyptic imagery" means imagery which reveals the unknown. But, whether you call it prophetic or apocalyptic, imagery is imagination in the end. We are justified, then, in saying that, if the resurrection of Christ is only a piece of prophetic or apocalyptic imagery, it is only imagination. In beginning to apply his methods of symbolism to the resurrection of Christ, the chief exponent of Modernism in this country says, "Here we are on difficult ground."® And to that extent we shall be disposed to agree with him.

But his difficulties are not over yet. He has disposed in his own way of the fact of Christ's resurrection. He has not yet succeeded in completely disposing of the narrative. That has still to be accounted for. If the Modernist's view is correct, the narrative of the resurrection given by the Evangelists is the narrative of visions beheld by the Apostles, the holy women, and the other witnesses. But there is no hint given in the narratives themselves that visions are being described. We should naturally expect some such hint. When St John is about to relate his vision in the Apocalypse, he prepares us for it: "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day" (Apoc. i. 10). When St Paul has to record the visions he beheld when he was rapt to the third heaven, he tells us so: "I will come to the visions and revelations of the Lord" (2 Cor. xii. 2). In the case of Christ's resurrection, there is no

such suggestion. The narrative reads as plain, straightforward matter of fact. But, the Modernists tell us, it is not to be taken as true to fact, but as true only with symbolic truth. We know that kind of narrative. We call it allegory; that is to say, a truth conveyed picturesquely through the medium of a fictitious narrative. We have classical examples of it in our own literature, in Spenser's "Faery Queen," and Dean Swift's "Tale of a Tub," and John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." When Bunyan tells us about Mr Worldly Wiseman, and Giant Despair, and Vanity Fair, and Doubting Castle, and the Slough of Despond, and the rest, we understand perfectly that the persons and places so named are not true to fact, but only symbols of a truth, the truth, namely, of the pilgrim's progress, of Christian's journey to Heaven. And, if the narrative of the resurrection given by the Evangelists is true, not to fact, but only with symbolic truth, then that narrative is allegory too; but with this important difference between it and other allegories, that no hint is given that it is allegory.

As explained by the Modernists, then, the narrative of the Evangelist is to be classed with the "Pilgrim's Progress" and the "Quest of the Holy Grail," and the "Legends of the Nibelungen Ring" and the Icelandic Saga. The out-and-out unbeliever makes the Scriptures pure invention. The Modernist makes them a fairy-tale. There is not much to choose between the two.

But, just as the Modernists are sensitive to their "visions" being called imaginations, they are equally sensitive to the narratives of these visions being called allegories. "No prophet feels or would allow that his utterances are merely poetical or allegorical; he feels that they are not less but more truly representative of reality . . . than the prose language of historical narrative."® To which we reply, in treating of the narratives of the Evangelists, we are concerned not with prophets, but with historians. And, even if we were, the prophet is no more entitled than the historian to relate as fact what is not fact. We mentioned Archbishop Whately just now in another connection. He has some weighty words on this subject. "It is perfectly allowable to bring forward a parable or allegory avowedly as such . . . but to relate what is not true in the sense in which it is sure to be understood, is what we should call by a very different name from allegory. That such dishonesty should be attributed to our sacred writers by avowed anti-Christians is nothing strange or alarming. But when professed Christian teachers speak thus, they attack the very foundations both of religion and morality."!® The Modernists object to the term allegory. They will hardly prefer the alternative suggested by Archbishop Whately.

Christ's resurrection, then, according to the Modernists, comes to this: Christ did not really rise again; the Apostles thought He did, and said so; but we need not quarrel with them on that account, for their statements are true, as being symbolical of a grand spiritual truth, that "the divine personality of Jesus cannot die." That truth is what the Modernist professes his belief in, when he says he believes in the resurrection. But what he really believes in is a symbol, which depends for its value upon a series of visions or apparitions, or imaginations, or hallucinations, our only evidence for which is an allegorical narrative. Such belief imposes too severe a strain upon our credulity. Most people will find it easier to believe in the Catholic doctrine of the resurrection at once.

Most people will think that a symbol deduced from an event which never happened, but which is represented as if it had, is a symbol deduced from a lie; it is a lying symbol, and, if so, what is the value of the truth it is supposed to signify?

No one would wish to deny that symbolism has a force and value of its own. We are familiar with it in many a conventional form, and emblem, and device. The rose, the thistle, and the shamrock are symbols we all know and understand, or the anchor as the symbol of hope, the palm as the symbol of triumph or martyrdom. And symbolism has its place, an important place, in religion, both under the old law and under the new. The types and figures of the old law were symbols: the paschal lamb, the symbol of the Lamb of God; the brazen serpent, the symbol of His Crucifixion. And, under the new law, our very creeds are called symbols; they are signs, distinctive marks of those professing the same faith. The sacraments are symbols; they are outward signs of the inward grace they confer. The Church's ritual, its language, its ceremonies, are full of symbolism. But the Modernist symbolism — a symbolism which first denies a fact and then uses it as a symbol — this is symbolism gone mad. The Modernist tells us that the resurrection of Christ is not a fact, but a symbol. What we have sought to show in reply is that, if it is not a fact, it is not a symbol. The resurrection is one of those miracles by which the Jesus of history is proved to be God. We have seen how Modernists try to evade its force, not by denying it utterly but by explaining it symbolically. And that theory of symbolism they apply not only to the dogma of Christ's resurrection, but to all the Church's dogmatic teaching. You may accept the dogma and retain the very terms, in which it is expressed provided that you interpret them symbolically. We have tested the value of that theory in one instance. We can judge of its value in others. But, what is more, from this one example we can judge of the success of Modernism in its endeavour to interpret Christianity in terms of modern thought.

{II "Quelques Lettres," Loisy, pp. 71, 73-4, 156.

{2} "Through Scylla and Charybdis," Tyrrell, p. 334.

{3I "Christianity at the Cross Roads," Tyrrell, p. 151.

{4{ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

{5j "Christianity at the Cross Roads," Tyrrell, pp. 145, 146.

{6} " Through Scylla and Charybdis," Tyrrell, p. 230, etc.

{7I "Christianity at the Cross Roads," Tyrrell, pp. 95, 144, etc.

{8} "Christianity at the Cross Roads," Tyrrell, p. 143.

{9} "Through Scylla and Charybdis," Tyrrell, p. 230.

{10} " Archbishop Whately's Miscellaneous Remains, Allegory," p. 193.

## Lecture V

### Modernism and Dogma

#### II Pragmatism

IN our last lecture we saw how Modernism deals with dogma, and we took as an illustration the dogma of Christ's resurrection. The Modernist's method is to accept the dogma, and to accept the very terms in which it is stated, and then to interpret them in his own way. Thus, in the example cited, a Modernist, like a Catholic, would profess his belief in Christ's resurrection, he would say it is quite true. But if you ask him in what sense true, he would answer: "Not true to fact, not true historically, but true in another sense, and that other sense two-fold. First, it is true symbolically, as a symbol of truth." And if you ask: "What is that truth of which Christ's resurrection is a symbol?" the Modernist answers: "The truth that the divine personality of Jesus cannot die." That, in the first place, is the truth which the Modernist tells us the dogma of Christ's resurrection conveys to him. And this is a truth of a theoretical or speculative kind. We discussed it in our last lecture. But, besides this, he tells us that the dogma conveys to him a practical truth also, and that practical truth he states thus: "Jesus is risen, means deal with Him as you would have done before His death, as you deal with a contemporary."<sup>11</sup> The dogma of Christ's resurrection, thus believed, is true with practical truth, with instrumental truth; it is an instrument of practical value for the believer. He derives benefit from his belief.

For both these reasons, then, the Modernist assures us, the dogma of Christ's resurrection is to be called true. We saw in our last lecture what is to be thought of dogma interpreted symbolically. We come now to consider what is to be thought of dogma interpreted practically or instrumentally.

It is to this latter form of interpretation that many Modernists seem to attach most importance. "A dogma has above all a practical meaning ... it is first and foremost a rule of practical conduct therein lies its principal value" – so writes a well-known Modernist, and he illustrates his meaning by examples. Thus: "God is a Personal Being, means conduct yourself in your relations with God as you would in your relations with a personal human being. . . In like manner, the dogma of the Real Presence means that one should adopt the same attitude in presence of the consecrated Host; that one would adopt in presence of Jesus made visible to the eye."<sup>12</sup>

Observe the Modernists' standpoint. "We do not say," they explain, "that these dogmas are true to fact. On the contrary, in some instances at least, as in that of Christ's resurrection, we expressly deny it. But still we say that they are not to be called false. For they are true in two senses. First, with symbolic truth; secondly, with practical or instrumental truth. Although they are not true to fact, you may act as if they were, and you are the better for doing so." It is only this latter value of dogma we are to discuss

now, its practical value. And on hearing it stated, it occurs to us at once to say this is Pragmatism.

Modernism, it will be remembered, seeks to interpret Christianity in terms of modern thought. The system to which the name of Pragmatism has been given is certainly modern enough. It is hardly twenty years old.® As its name sufficiently indicates, it is nothing if not practical. It had its origin, as was appropriate, in America, that land of strenuous practical endeavour, and its chief exponent is an American – the late Professor W. James. Now Pragmatism stands among other things for "a theory of truth,"® and the pragmatic theory of truth is this – practice is the test of truth. "An idea is true so long as to believe it is profitable to our lives."® To which the retort is obvious: that is not truth, it is a misuse of the term, that is utility or expediency, not truth. Say, rather, an idea is useful or expedient or convenient, so long as to believe it is profitable to our lives, but do not say it is true. And the Pragmatist candidly admits that to him truth is expediency. "The true is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as the right is only the expedient in the way of our behaving." This is sufficiently startling. But the Pragmatist goes further still. "Truth in our ideas means their power to work."® "Pragmatism's only test of truth is what works best."® "If the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily ... it is true."® In other words, the -truth of any particular statement is an hypothesis, a working theory, and so the truth of God's existence is a working theory, on a par with any other working theory, such as the nebular theory, or the atomic theory, or theories of electrons and ether and the rest. But working theories change. The working theory of to-day is rejected to-morrow in favour of a theory which works better. Does truth change too? The Pragmatist says yes: "We have to live to-day by what truth we can get to-day, and be ready tomorrow to call it falsehood."®

So truth is a variable quantity, and must be according to this account of the matter. For truth being "that which works best," it can only be tested and verified by our experience of its working.® But experience varies. The experience of one man varies from the experience of another; nay, the same man's experience may vary from day to day, and therefore truth varies too.®

Such is the Pragmatists' theory of truth stated in their own words, and it must be owned it is a novel theory. What is truth? Pilate asked our Lord. That question was not answered. And the world has been debating it ever since. The answers returned have been many, and often contradictory. Other systems have agreed with Pragmatism in holding truth to be relative, subjective, variable, shifting. But I think it has been reserved to Pragmatism to define truth as expediency, to say: "The true is only the expedient in the way of our thinking." That gives us the measure of Pragmatism.

There can be no doubt that Pragmatism owes something to the influence of Kant. We have already heard in a previous lecture of Kant's "Regulative Principles of Conduct," a term which recalls one of the Pragmatist's main positions. By his insistence on the moral law, the law of action, as the basis of truth, Kant may be said to have prepared the way for that gospel of action which is known as Pragmatism. Modernism seems unable to rid itself of the influence of Kant. We are not surprised to find, then, that Modernism adopts

the pragmatic theory of truth, and applies it to dogma. How completely it adopts it appears from such passages as the following: "Truth is from first to last an instrument, or rather a factor of life and action."<sup>112</sup> In other words, an idea is true for its instrumental value. This is the instrumental truth of the Modernist, which we thus see to be identical with truth as the Pragmatist defines it. Again, still more explicitly: "The truth (of an idea) means, go here or there; do this or that."<sup>11</sup> That is to say, truth is only a practical rule of conduct. And, having thus adopted the Pragmatist theory of truth, the Modernist applies it to dogma. "I admit," writes one Modernist, "the fundamental positions of Christianity not as doctrines demonstrated but as accepted rules."<sup>113</sup> And another: "As regards the foundations of Catholicism, the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, of the existence of a personal God, of the divinity of Christ, in them we recognise the Pragmatist attitude. ... We insist upon the relativity of these dogmatic conceptions, their purely practical value, their temporary character. They have, in fact, nourished for long ages the religious sense of the human race."<sup>114</sup> In words like these Modernists identify themselves with Pragmatists to the extent at least of identifying their theory of truth with theirs, and applying it to dogma. So that it has been truly said: "Modernism is an application of Pragmatism, to religious beliefs."<sup>115</sup> The Modernist's instrumental truth is nothing more or less than the Pragmatist's truth of expediency. But a system which, like the Pragmatist, cynically declares that "the true is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as the right is only the expedient in the way of our behaving," such a system to a Catholic stands self-refuted and self-condemned. The Modernist cannot escape his share in that condemnation.

"What is truth?" When a Catholic is asked that question in reference to dogma, when he is asked what he means when he says that a dogma of the faith is true, he replies that he means first and foremost that the dogma is true in the ordinary acceptation of the term, that it is true inasmuch as it corresponds with fact, with reality. Thus to a Catholic the dogma of Christ's resurrection means that Christ has risen in very deed from the dead. This being conceded, the Catholic is quite ready to admit that the dogma may have a symbolical and a practical or instrumental value too: a symbolical value, because Christ's resurrection is the symbol of ours, and a practical or instrumental value, because of the practical bearing of Christ's resurrection upon our life and death and resurrection. And you may, if you please, call these, symbolical and instrumental values the symbolical and instrumental truth of the dogma. But these symbolical and instrumental values of a dogma do not constitute its truth. They are consequences of its being true. It has a truth of its own independently of them; and these values depend upon its truth.

To say, as Modernists say, that a dogma is not true to fact, but is true symbolically, is, as we have shown already, to reduce dogma to allegory. And to say, as Modernists say, that a dogma is not true to fact, but is true instrumentally or practically, is to reduce all dogma to precept, to a rule of conduct, and, if that is the only truth claimed for it, it is to reduce all dogma to rule of thumb; it is to deprive our faith of all intellectual basis.

The more advanced Modernists would admit this. A recent writer, speaking of one of the leaders of the movement, M. Hébert, says: "He turned the teachings of religion into pious and moral allegories, whose practical efficacy seemed to him to be their *raison d'être* and

justification."<sup>112</sup> In other words, the only use of dogma lies in its symbolic and pragmatic interpretation!

{1} Leroy in "La Quinzaine," 16th April, 1905.

{2} Leroy in "La Quinzaine," 16th April,

{3} First propounded by Mr C. Peirce in 1878. Comparatively unnoticed until 1898, when Professor W. James amplified and popularised it. See "Pragmatism," James, pp. 46, 47.

{4} "Pragmatism," James, p. 55.

151 *Ibid.*, p. 75. {3} *Ibid.*, p.222.

{6} "Pragmatism," James, p. 207.

{7} *Ibid.*, p. 80.

18! *Ibid.*, p. 299.

{9} *Ibid.*, p. 223.

{10} "Pragmatism," James, pp. 200, 201.

{11} *Ibid.*, p. 226.

{12} "Through Scylla and Charybdis," Tyrrell, p. 196.

{13} "Through Scylla and Charybdis," Tyrrell, p. 176.

114] Murri quoted by Houtin, "Histoire du Modernisme Catholique," p. 254.

{15} "Lettere di un Prete Modernista," Rome, 1908. Quoted by Houtin, *Ibid.*, p. 237. *Cp.* "Risposta," p. 91, "Fixed truth does not exist. It is no more immutable than man is; it is perpetually changing."

{16} L'Ami du Clergé, p. 38, 14th January, 1909. Quoted by Houtin, "Histoire du Modernisme Catholique," p. 31.

{17} "Histoire," Houtin, p. 7.

## Lecture VI



## Modernism and Theology

PERHAPS enough has been said in the foregoing lectures to illustrate Modernist methods in dealing with Catholic truth. They would explain it only by explaining it away. And now we may turn to the consideration of a charge which is one of those most commonly brought by Modernists that she has substituted theology for revelation. It is a charge of which we may expect to hear a good deal in the future. For it is a popular cry to go to the public upon in a Protestant country like this. To represent the Church as substituting for the pure, unadulterated word of God a man-made system of dogma, as compelling a servile adherence to creeds and formulas in place of the freedom of Gospel truth, to represent her as "making theological laws and rules a substitute for the creative spirit of light and love,"<sup>111</sup> nay, as attempting "to subject the whole kingdom of knowledge to the control of revelation identified with dogmatic theology,"<sup>121</sup> all this makes a telling appeal to the gallery. And the charge was promptly taken up by many organs of public opinion in this country. To quote only one, a Saturday Reviewer spoke of "the everlasting service which Modernists have rendered to the cause of religion by distinguishing between revelation and theology: revelation, Christ made known to us, theology, man's interpretation of Him. . . . The appeal to revelation," the reviewer continues, "as against theology, is simply an appeal to be allowed to learn from Christ."<sup>121</sup> What is suggested, of course, is that Catholic theology is a human corruption of a divine revelation, that it means learning from man instead of learning from Christ. That is the charge we have to meet.

Now a Catholic would agree with a Modernist in saying that the Christian revelation does mean Christ made known to us, made known to us in His Person and in His teaching. But the question remains, how made known? In answering that question the Catholic and the Modernist part company. The Catholic would answer: "Made known by Christ Himself in the first instance, by Christ Himself making Himself and His teaching known to the Apostles by word of mouth, and authorising them to make both known in like manner to others." That was Christ's own plan of revelation; that was the method devised by Christ Himself. "Revelation means learning from Christ," the Modernist says. "Quite so," the Catholic replies; "revelation means learning from Christ, but in the manner Christ ordained. And the manner which Christ ordained was that men should learn from Christ through men." For this purpose Christ constituted His Apostles and their successors a teaching body. "Going therefore teach ye all nations" (Matt, xxviii.); there is their commission as teachers. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you;" there is the subject matter of their teaching distinctly defined. "And behold I am with you all days even to the end of the world;" there is a guarantee of assistance in their teaching, Christ's personal guarantee of divine assistance to them and to their successors to the end of time. Those words of Christ constitute the charter of the Church as a teaching body.

In the Catholic sense, then, Christian revelation is Christ and Christ's doctrine "made known to us" in the manner and by the channel Christ Himself ordained, that is by the Church as a teaching body.

But, teaching body though she be, the Church may not originate her own teaching. What she had to teach was strictly prescribed. "Teaching them," Christ said, "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The body of doctrine thus confided by Christ to the Church's keeping, we call "the deposit of the faith." The Church might not add to nor subtract from that. But she had to guard it. *Depositum custodi* — guard the deposit — is St Paul's injunction to Timothy (1 Tim. vi. 20). And, as time went on, ever-increasing vigilance would be needed in its guardianship. As time went on, this or that doctrine of the deposit would be called in question, the Church would have to defend it. This or that doctrine would need clearer exposition, the Church would have to expound it. This or that doctrine would have to be declared in its full significance, to be worked out in its details, in its consequences, in its conclusions, to be traced in its legitimate development, to be studied in its relation to other doctrines, in its bearing upon the whole field of truth, natural and revealed, and for these purposes men had to exercise their reason upon revelation. Revelation being what it is, God's truth made known through the medium of the mind of man, and the mind of man being what it is, such an exercise of reason upon revelation was inevitable. And so there grew up in the Church — as it was natural there should in a teaching body — a school of thought, of thought employed upon revelation; a school of thought which gave birth to a science, a science of Christian dogma, a science not for the discovery of new dogmas, but for the preservation of the old. That science we call theology, dogmatic theology, for it is only with that branch of theology we are concerned now; and that school of theology has been adorned by some of the greatest minds the world has ever known, minds like those of an Augustine or an Aquinas or an Anselm or a Bonaventure, who have devoted their genius and learning to the highest purpose to which the genius and learning of man can be directed — to the study and elucidation of the teaching of Christ. In her schools of theology the Church has nothing to apologise for. They are one of the glories of the Catholic Church.

The difference, then, between revelation and theology, is clear. By revelation we mean the truth communicated by God to man; by theology we mean the orderly and systematic study of that truth. There is no confusion in the Catholic mind between revelation and theology. The two things are quite distinct.

But it might be thought there is some danger, nevertheless, of confusing the two. It might be thought there is some danger of theology encroaching upon revelation. Theology is a science, it has been said, and theologians are its professors. Professors of all sciences are proverbially prone to press their own theories, to exalt their own opinions into dogmas; and professors of theology may be no exception to the rule. And so it might be thought there is some ostensible ground for the charge that there is a tendency in the Church to substitute theology for revelation. Against any such danger Christ Himself has provided a safeguard. In instituting His Church, He did not commit the supreme teaching authority to theologians. He committed it to him, and to him alone, to whom and to whose successors He said: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not... do thou confirm the brethren." It is not from any professor's chair that we accept Christ's teaching, it is from the *Cathedra Petri* — the chair of Peter — and no conclusion of theologians, though it may call for respectful consideration, can command our assent, unless it come to us ratified, directly or indirectly, by that supreme authority. The See of Peter is the divinely

appointed guardian of the deposit of revelation. And in the task of guarding that deposit, theology has its proper place, an important place indeed, but a place that is secondary and subordinate.

The Church does not substitute theology for revelation. How comes it, then, that Modernists say she does?

To understand that, we must bear in mind the Modernist conceptions of revelation and theology, conceptions radically different from the Catholic conceptions just explained. We said at the beginning that a Catholic would agree with the Modernist that the Christian revelation means "Christ made known to man," but would disagree with him when it came to answering the question: how made known? We have just seen how the Catholic answers that question. His answer is: "Made known by the Church, by the Church a teaching body, by the Church an external agency." The Modernist would answer: "Not so, but by an inward, personal, religious experience." That Modernist theory of revelation has been discussed already in the course of these lectures. I need only remind you of it now. As a leading Modernist puts it: "Revelation is the self-manifestation of the Divine in our inward life."® And the same writer assures us that "faith in Christ never meant merely faith in a teacher and his doctrines, but an apprehension of his personality as revealing itself within us."® In the Modernist sense, then, revelation is a purely internal spiritual experiences But if this be so, revelation needs no external agency like the Church for its transmission. If revelation does not imply faith in a teacher, there is no need of a teaching body; and, if there is no teaching body, there is no room for a school of thought, the inevitable outcome of a teaching body, such as we have shown theology to be. The real gist of the Modernists' complaint is not so much that Catholic theology trespasses upon the domain of revelation; it is rather of the existence of revelation and theology in the Catholic sense at all.

In a system which declares revelation to be a matter solely of interior religious experience, if there be room for any school of theology, it will be a school not for the study and interpretation of a body of teaching – that is precluded by Modernist theories – it will be a school for "the taking account of individual and collective religious experiences,"® a school, that is, for the registering and comparing of religious experiences. But such experiences – as Modernists admit – are from their very nature incapable of exact expression in thought or language. Such a school, then, would be not so much a school of thought, as a school of impressions, a school of fancy, a school of sentiment, a school of what it is becoming the fashion to call mysticism, a school exposed to all the dangers of self-deception and hallucination and morbid imaginings to which so-called mysticism is liable, when deprived of the controlling influence of the teaching Church, a school which opens the door wide to all the religious extravagances and hysterical excesses of which the spirit of man is capable, when it believes itself to be directly acted upon by the Spirit of God. Such is the only possible Modernist alternative, to the sobriety and restraint and measured precision of thought and statement, which characterise the Catholic schools of theology. The difference is between a school of religious thought and a school of religious emotionalism. Of the two, which is likely to be

the safer guide in the study of revelation, and which of the two is the more likely to impose upon mankind a man-made system of theology in place of a divine revelation?

It is against theories like these that St Paul is warning his favourite disciple in the passage already quoted. He treats them with scant ceremony. He calls them "vain babblings, profane novelties of words . . . which some professing have erred concerning the faith," and in opposition to such theories his advice is clear and emphatic: "Guard the deposit."

{1} "Through Scylla and Charybdis," Tyrrell, p. 239.

j2! *Ibid.*, p. 214.

{3} Saturday Review, "Devout Scepticism," 21st December, 1912.

{4} "Autour d'un petit livre," Loisy, p. 192 *seq.*

{5} "Through Scylla and Charybdis," Tyrrell, p. 305.

{6} "Life of Fr. Tyrrell," ii., p. 402.

{7} "Through Scylla and Charybdis," p. 229.

## Lecture VII

### Modernism – Historical Retrospect

IT was said in our opening lecture that Modernism represents a spirit, a tendency, a movement in contemporary thought rather than a cut-and-dried system. Such movements develop almost imperceptibly. It is difficult, therefore, to trace the history of Modernism, to say precisely how and when it arose. But certain stages in its development may be put on record.

The name Modernism would seem to be derived from France; the thing would seem to owe its origin partly to French, partly to German sources. The name, it is said, is as old as the days of Jean Jacques Rousseau, the French philosopher and deist of the latter half of the eighteenth century. He used the term Modernist of certain savants of his own time and country who were the forerunners, apparently, of our modern evolutionists. But, as applied to the system we have been discussing, the term Modernism seems first to have come into general use in Italy some eight or nine years ago. The thing, the system of Modernism, as sufficiently appears from what has been said, may be ultimately ascribed to the German professor of Königsberg in the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant. The name of Modernism, then, may be traced to Rousseau, the system ultimately to Kant. But Modernism in its present form is much more recent than either Rousseau or Kant.

In the year 1864, Pope Pius IX. published his famous Syllabus of errors against the faith, in which he solemnly condemned by anticipation some of the most conspicuous doctrines of the Modernism of the present day. The views which distinguish it were gaining ground even then, but, as a system, it seems to have developed somewhat as follows. There was a French Catholic Professor of the University of Lille, by name Maurice Blondel, who was known to be imbued with Kantian ideas. He had first come into notice as the author of an essay entitled "L'Action," directed to the harmonising of Catholicity and modern thought. In the year 1896 he published a "Letter," in which he attacked the traditional methods of defence employed by the Church against the infidel philosophy and science of the day. He declared that traditional method of the Church to be antiquated and out-of-date. He contended that some new kind of apologetics was necessary to meet the requirements of modern thought. He was followed soon after by a French Oratorian priest, Père Laberthonnière, who, in 1897, published a book called "The Religious Problem," very much on the same lines as the "Letters" of Maurice Blondel. Similar views had been expressed in print by another French priest, the Abbé Marcel Hébert, an avowed disciple of Kant, a professor of philosophy in the École Fénelon in Paris. Observe, the attack was delivered at first upon Scholasticism, of which it is enough to say here, that it is the traditional method employed in Catholic schools of philosophy and theology. Blondel, Laberthonnière, and Hébert were soon joined by a more formidable adherent, the Abbé Loisy.

The Abbé Loisy had already come into some prominence as a man of extreme views on scriptural subjects; he became one of the leaders of this new movement, and, therefore, we must devote a little more attention to him. He began his career as a professor in the Catholic Institute of Paris. He was a man of brilliant abilities and of great learning; but, after a brief tenure of his chair, he had to be dismissed on account of his liberalising tendencies, by the Rector of the Institute, the late Mgr. d'Hulst. At that time, however, he was not formally condemned. He became chaplain to the Dominican Convent of Neuilly, near Paris, but unhappily, while residing there, he began to publish under assumed names papers and articles, many of which were in distinct opposition to Catholic teaching. Such furtive methods of propagating their views have unfortunately become characteristic of the leaders of Modernism. Loisy seems to have set the example. From his retirement as chaplain he presently emerged as professor again, this time in a Government post, in a lay school of higher studies in Paris. There, under Government patronage, he became bolder, and published what is perhaps his best-known work, "The Gospel and the Church." That book was a reply to a work by the German Lutheran professor, Hamack, entitled "The Essence of Christianity." Loisy's book was ostensibly a defence of the Church. But its main thesis was "The necessity of the adaptation of the Gospel to the changing needs of humanity." And the adaptation advocated by Loisy was of such a radical kind that this book and similar publications led to his condemnation, and, on his refusal to retract, to his excommunication in 1908. We have mentioned Blondel, Laberthonnière, Hébert, and Loisy. To these may be added Leroy, another French lay professor, whose book, "Dogma and Criticism," reversed all accepted notions of what dogma means, and the Abbé Houtin, who, in the "Crisis of the Clergy," published a violent, attack upon the Church. Observe the rate at which Modernism was travelling. At first it began with an attack on the scholastic system; in a few years' time it developed into an attack upon the Church

itself. However, the views thus advocated began to spread among some of the younger and more adventurous spirits in the ranks of the French clergy. From France they passed, chiefly through the writings of Loisy, into Germany and Italy. In Germany the names of Schell and Schnitzer were associated with the movement, and, in Italy, those of Romolo Murri, the priest-agitator, and of Fogazzaro, the well-known author of "Il Santo." England did not escape the invasion of the new errors, as the "Autobiography and Life of Father Tyrrell" sufficiently proves, and in the year 1900 a joint pastoral of the English Bishops warned English Catholics against them. It might have given pause to those Catholics who affected Modernist views if they had taken note of the kind of persons who claimed fellowship with them. To confine ourselves to France, the cradle of the movement, there were first the Sabatiers, the younger of whom, Paul, lectured on Modernism here in London at the Passmore Settlement in 1908, and was dubbed in France the Pope of Modernism; but the Sabatiers were Protestant divines of what we should call in England broad-Church views. Another ally of the Modernists was the well-known Professor of the College of France, Henri Bergson, but Bergson is a professed free-thinker. And yet another patron of the movement was Solomon Reinach, the distinguished archaeologist and art critic and *littérateur*, but a Jew.

So much with reference to the leaders. To come to the rank and file. What the number of the adherents of Modernism may have been at any given time is difficult to estimate. It was undoubtedly large at one period, especially in France and Italy. In 1909 a French writer went so far as to say that the number of Modernists amongst the French clergy alone might be computed as at least fifteen thousand.<sup>111</sup> This was a gross exaggeration, a libel on the French clergy as a body, it was promptly contradicted by one who was perhaps the best authority on the subject – the Abbé Loisy himself. Loisy said that he would not put the number at fifteen hundred, and he added that, in his opinion, Modernism had for the moment sustained a complete rout.<sup>121</sup> That was true of the movement considered as a public agitation carried on openly and without concealment in the Church. And what brought about the rout was the energetic action taken by Pope Pius X. In July, 1907, he published a syllabus – "Lamentabili" – in which he condemned sixty-five of the most distinctive doctrines of Modernism. They were extracted chiefly from Loisy's writings. Later, on September 8th of the same year, he published his famous encyclical "Pascendi," in which he condemned the whole system of Modernism, root and branch.

As was to be expected, both the Pope himself and his measures were severely criticised in certain quarters. He was represented as the very type of a reactionary and obscurantist Roman Pontiff, eager to repress by violent means every indication within the Church of originality of thought and independence of judgment, attempting to stifle a movement with which some of the best thinkers of the age were in sympathy, and which, if properly directed instead of suppressed, might have resulted in incalculable benefit to the cause of religion in general. And not only the person of the Pontiff, the measures also taken by him were fiercely attacked. Such measures were the regulation of the professional studies of the clergy, the prohibition of the reading of books dangerous to faith and morals, the anti-Modernist oath exacted from the officials of the Church and candidates for Holy Orders, and the like. Such measures were denounced as tyrannical, trivial; so trivial, so

minute, as to be childish. But the measures had to be drastic, and to descend to matter of detail, if they were to be effective at all. Vague, general denunciations would have been of little use. I wonder how many of those who thus found fault with the Holy Father's action understood what Modernism really meant. I wonder how many of those Christian critics who were among the severest in their criticisms suspected that they were undermining their own position. I wonder how many of them realised that Modernism struck at the very roots of Christianity itself. What the Holy Father did was to tear away the mask from Modernism, and expose it to the world in its true colours as subversive of the Christian faith; and all who called themselves Christians should have been grateful to him for doing so. We Catholics at least may thank God that in Pius X. we possess a Pope quick to discern error, and prompt to crush it. We who in this country are accustomed to the spectacle of a State-Church which, in face of the determined onslaught of infidelity upon Christian truth, compromises and temporises and economises and minimises, we who almost daily read and hear of doctrines incompatible with the most elementary Christian notions taught without protest by so-called Christian teachers from so-called Christian pulpits, while ecclesiastical authority looks on with folded arms, helpless, inarticulate, tongue-tied, incapable of taking any steps to protect the truth of which it is supposed to be the official guardian in the land; we, who are more happily circumstanced, may thank God that in Pius X. we possess a Pope who understands his office better, and is more conscious of its solemn duties and responsibilities; we may thank God that, whenever the need arises, and Christian truth is called in question, above the confused babel of conflicting tongues there rings out loud and clear, proclaiming truth and refuting error, the voice of the successor of him to whom Christ gave the charge of the sheep and lambs of His flock, for whom Christ prayed that his faith might fail not, whom Christ appointed to confirm the brethren. Pius X. will go down to history distinguished amongst the illustrious line of Roman Pontiffs for his vigilance in watching over the deposit of the faith entrusted to his keeping, and for his courage, his superb courage, in defending it; and nowhere have these qualities been more conspicuously displayed than in his condemnation of Modernism. *Dominus conservet eum et vivificet eum et beatum faciat eum in terra et non tradat eum in animam inimicorum ejus.*

"The Pope has spoken, Modernism has ceased to be." Such were the words of the distinguished French novelist and academician, Paul Bourget, spoken four years ago. They are true of Modernism regarded as a public movement within the Church. But it would be a mistake to suppose that Modernism as a hidden force is extinct. We need not credit the stories of a secret propaganda, a sort of organised Freemasonry of Modernism among the faithful. We need not accept as authentic the manifesto which purported to come from large numbers of the French clergy, and which declared their intention of subscribing to the anti-Modernist oath as a mere outward formality, while inwardly repudiating it. This document appeared in the public Press in 1910; it was unsigned, and, if authentic at all, was probably the work of a handful of malcontents. But, apart from such exaggerated statements, there is evidence to show that Modernism still reckons some secret adherents among the clergy and laity of the Catholic Church. Whatever their numbers, they seem to be considerable enough to encourage them in the hope of gradually influencing the general body of the faithful. It was with the object of warning

Catholics against that danger, and of helping them to realise its character, that the foregoing course of lectures was undertaken.

{1} Reinack "Orpheus," p. 581. Quoted by Houtin "Histoire," p. 268.

{2} Reinach, "Orpheus," p. 581.

## Conclusion

MUCH more might be said of Modernism. What has been said is perhaps enough to indicate its radical error, and the effect of that error upon the Modernist endeavour to readjust Catholicity to modern thought. The initial error of Modernism is the error of Kant, that God and the supernatural are unattainable by intellectual knowledge. It has been pointed out in the foregoing lectures how that theory reappears again and again in Modernist teachings. But it is a theory which is fatal to the Catholic doctrine of faith, for faith is intellectual assent to supernatural truth revealed. Other heresies have attacked this or that particular object of faith, now the Incarnation, now the Virgin Birth, now the Real Presence, now the Papal claims; Modernism strikes at faith itself. Hence, in his process of readjusting Catholicity to modern thought, the Modernist is driven to this conclusion: "It is not the articles of the creed, but the word 'credo' that needs adjustment."<sup>11</sup> Precisely, it is the very notion of faith that needs readjusting to suit the Modernist. The same writer calls that "a theological revolution."<sup>12</sup> And so it is, but it is a theological revolution for which Catholics at least are not prepared.

THE END

11] "Life of Fr. Tyrrell," ii., p. 220.

{2} *Ibid.*