

## THE OATH AGAINST MODERNISM

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FROM the beginning of this present year (1911) the new order instituted by the Motu Proprio, *Sacrorum Antistitum*, of September 1, 1910, has come into force, and, in accordance with its terms, a new form of oath specially directed against the errors of Modernism is prescribed, as, in addition to the Creed of Pius IV with its Vatican supplement, to be taken by all clerics previously to receiving Holy Orders ; by all priests authorized to hear confessions or to preach sermons ; by all parish priests, Canons, or holders of benefices ; by all officials of Episcopal Courts or Ecclesiastical tribunals, not excepting the Vicar-General and the Judges ; by all those called in to preach during Lent ; by all officials of the Roman Congregations or tribunals, to be taken in the presence of the Cardinal Prefect of the respective Congregations or tribunals ; by the Superiors and Doctors of all the Religious Orders and Congregations.

The text of this prescribed Oath is somewhat long, but, as its character has been grossly misrepresented, it is best to give it whole and entire,

in an English translation,<sup>1</sup> that it may be seen how moderate it is in its language, and how it confines itself to the most essential articles of Catholic doctrine as the faithful have always understood them, and the Church has authoritatively defined them.

I . . . firmly embrace and receive all and singular, the things that have been defined, affirmed, and declared by the unerring *magisterium* of the Church, particularly those articles of doctrine which are directly opposed to the errors of the present age. And, in the first place, I acknowledge that the existence of God, the source and end of all things, can be certainly known and even demonstrated by the natural light of reason, through the things that have been made, that is, through the visible works of creation, as a cause [is known] through its effects. Secondly I admit and recognize the external proofs of revelation, that is, the divine facts, and chief among these the miracles and prophecies, as most certain signs of the divine origin of the Christian religion, and as especially adapted to the intelligence of men of all ages and classes, the present age included. Thirdly, I likewise believe with firm faith that the Church, the custodian and teacher of the revealed word, was proximately and directly instituted by the true historical Christ Himself whilst He was living among us, and that it was built by Him on Peter, the Prince of the apostolic hierarchy, and his successors through the ages. Fourthly, I sincerely accept the doctrine of the faith, transmitted in the same sense and the same meaning through the orthodox Fathers, from the Apostles down to ourselves; and hence I reject wholly the heretical conception of an evolution of dogmas whereby these [are said to] pass from one sense to another, the latter differing from what the Church previously held; and I likewise condemn every error according to which in place of [the belief that the Church's doctrine is] a divine deposit, delivered over to the Spouse of Christ to be by her faithfully preserved, is substituted the notion that it is a philosophical invention, or a creation of the human consciousness, gradually elaborated by the efforts of men, and destined to be perfected by an indefinite progress in the future. Fifthly, I hold most firmly and I sincerely profess that faith is not a blind sentiment of religion springing up from the secret fountains of *subconsciousness*, under the pressure of the heart and bent of the will when it is morally inclined (*moraliter intor-*

<sup>1</sup> For the original Latin text see Father Dunford's *Roman Documents and Decrees* (Washbourne), vol. iv. No. 17, and for that of the *Pascendi* and *Lamentabili*, *ibid.* vol. ii. No. 5.

*matae*), but a true assent of the intellect to truth received from without through the hearing ; an assent, that is, by which we believe in as true, on the authority of God who is supremely truthful, all that has been testified and revealed by the Personal God who is our Creator and Lord.

Moreover, I submit myself with due reverence and adhere with my whole soul to all the condemnations, declarations, and prescriptions contained in the Encyclical Letter *Pascendi* and the Decree *Lamentabili*, especially in so far as they regard the so-called history of dogmas. Also I reprobate the error of those who affirm that the faith propounded by the Church may be in conflict with history ; and that Catholic dogmas, taken in the sense in which they are now understood, cannot be harmonized with the true origins of the Christian religion. Also I condemn and reject the opinion of those who say that a Christian man, if fully educated, assumes two characters, one that of a believer, the other that of a historian, as if it were lawful to him as a historian to hold for true what contradicts his faith as a believer, or to lay down premisses from which it follows that the dogmas [of faith] are false or doubtful—as long as he does not directly deny them. Also I reprobate that method of judging and interpreting Holy Scripture which, in disregard of the tradition of the Church, the analogy of the faith, and the rules laid down by the Apostolic See, adheres to the systems devised by the rationalists, and not less arbitrarily (*licenter*) than rashly upholds the criticism of the text as its one and supreme rule. Also I reject the opinion of those who hold that a professor when lecturing on the history of theology, or writing on the same, should begin by laying aside any preconceived opinion he may have as to the supernatural origin of Catholic tradition, or as to the divine aid promised for the perpetual conservation of each revealed truth ; and likewise when interpreting the writings of any of the Fathers should be governed in his investigations solely by the principles of science in disregard of all sacred authority, and with the same freedom of judgement as he would use in investigating any purely secular documents. Finally and in general, I profess myself most opposed to the error of the Modernists who hold that there is nothing divine in the sacred tradition [of the Church] ; or even do far worse by admitting it in a pantheistic sense ; so that [for them] it becomes nothing more than a bare and simple fact, differing in no respect from the common facts of history ; the fact, namely, that men by their industry, ability, and talent have carried on through the subsequent generations a school [of thought] initiated by Christ and His Apostles. I hold therefore most firmly, and will hold to the last breath of my life, to the faith of the Fathers concerning the sure *charisma* of truth, which is, was, and ever will be, in the *succession of the Episcopale from the Apostles* (Iren. iv. c. 26), in the sense, not that that be held which appears best and fittest

to each age conformably with the degree of its culture, but that the absolute and immutable truth preached from the beginning by the Apostles be never believed or understood to be aught else than it was believed and understood to be then.

All these things I promise that I will faithfully, entirely, and sincerely keep and inviolably guard, so as never to depart from them in teaching or in any other way, by word or writing. Thus I promise, thus I swear, so may God help me, and these His Holy Gospels.

As all the world knows, the determination with which Pius X is striving to protect the faithful from this veritable cancer of Modernism, has been received on the part of the Modernists themselves within the Church and without it, with a loud outcry of indignation, an outcry which has been renewed each time some further measure directed to that end has emanated from the Holy See, and is particularly clamorous now that this latest and most clenching measure of requiring an anti-Modernist oath from all who participate in any way in the Church's teaching office, is beginning to be put in force. It is a cruel and tyrannical policy, we are told by these objectors, which Leo XIII would never have approved, and former generations of Catholics would never have tolerated. It marks an entirely new departure from the sound traditions of Church government which have hitherto prevailed, and under which the Catholic Church has thriven so remarkably in the course of her history. It seeks to impose on the human conscience a perverse conflict with its own moral nature, and reflects a spirit of intellectual dishonesty which is painful to witness in the holder of so responsible an office. It cannot be dictated by any worthy motives, and is only explicable as prompted by a blind hatred of those

who strive to harmonize their faith with indisputable facts. It fills with amazement the devoted phalanx of learned Catholics whose one desire was to consecrate their studies to the service of their Church. It can only result in some terrible disaster to a Church already sufficiently harassed by the assaults of secularism ; indeed, were it not that it will certainly have to be revoked and repaired, it must sooner or later end by breaking up the fair creation of these nineteen Christian centuries. Such, in effect, are the voices of reproach and condemnation levelled against Pius X which reach us from various quarters, private and public, and in particular from the Modernist organs on the Continent, or from our English papers and periodicals when they lend their columns to the representatives of the same party at home.

It is not our intention in this tract to discuss the Modernist system in itself, but the more limited subject of the propriety of this new Oath, in view of the campaign against the traditional Catholic belief which the Modernists are at present pursuing. To two questions we shall confine ourselves : (1) Is the Holy See justified in exacting as a condition for holding office in its communion or receiving the Sacraments, oaths of interior adhesion to these formulas of faith? (2) Is the occasion which has now arisen sufficient to justify the drawing up and imposition of such a formula?

1. One thing is at least certain, Pius X is making no new departure in imposing the formula con-

tained in the *Sacrorum Antistitum*; he is merely continuing the immemorial practice of the Catholic Church. The principle of belief imposed by authority as an essential condition for Baptism, that is for admission to membership of the Church, is involved in the very words, as reported by St. Matthew and St. Mark, with which our Lord gave His final commission to the Apostles—"Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be condemned." And that it was so understood by the early Church is proved by their incorporating into the discipline of the catechumenate the ceremonies of the *traditio fidei* or delivery of the formula of faith to the aspirant for him to study, and of the subsequent *redditio fidei* when he was required to recite it publicly. It is possible that the original form of this symbol contained only the affirmation, "I believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost"—or what would be equivalent to this, an affirmative answer to a threefold interrogation to this effect. But at a very early date, as is well known, this doctrinal outline was filled in with articles stating explicitly the principal things that were to be believed concerning each of the three Divine Persons. Thus developed it assumed the form which we know by the name of the Apostles' Creed, but which seems really to have been the ancient baptismal symbol of the Roman Church, and was paralleled by closely similar symbols in use for the same purpose in other ancient Churches. Later on,

errors arose which were in conflict with the meaning which the Church attached to some one or other article of this symbol as then in use, but which sought to establish themselves by claiming to be its legitimate interpretations. Out of the controversies thus aroused issued, through the Councils of Nicæa (325) and Constantinople (381), the further defining clauses which mark what we call the Nicene Creed, a Creed which, though it has never supplanted the Apostles' Creed in the baptismal rite of the West, has taken an even more solemn place in the Church's Liturgy, by becoming the formula in which the faithful are called upon to confess their faith, when they take their part in the supreme act of Catholic worship. The so-called Athanasian Creed is another formula devised for the same purpose, and marking a further advance in the precision of its definitions. It was not compiled by any Council, and only gradually became a recognized formula of the Church. Still, it did eventually attain that rank, and was incorporated in the Office of Prime. This was to impose it as a profession of faith on all bound to the recitation of the Divine Office, and we know from modern controversies in another communion how authoritative and uncompromising its language is felt to be.

In these three Symbols of Faith we have the precedents firmly set which many other similar formulas have followed. They exhibit, too, with sufficient completeness, the motive and manner of the consecutive enlargements. First, there is the principle that a more simple form which

sufficed for the protection of the faith at an earlier time, may require to be supplemented by clauses directed against errors that have become rampant in some later age. Then there is the distinction between additions which define more precisely and with more detail the sense in which the Church had always understood the older forms, and additions introducing further articles which had indeed always belonged to the faith, but, until they were attacked or misconstrued, had not needed to be incorporated in lists of articles for public recitation which were not intended to be exhaustive. Instances of the former class are the Athanasian Creed, as supervening on the Nicene, and the Nicene, as supervening on the Apostles' Creed. An instance of the latter is the expansion into the Apostles' Creed of the original profession (if original it was) of belief in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

In the past history of the Catholic Church we can find innumerable instances of formulas of faith drawn up on these principles. To none of them have been accorded quite the intimate place in her liturgical offices that has been given to the three already mentioned ; but some of them were intended for general use in the Church, and some for administration to individuals or bodies of men seeking reconciliation with the Church, or to individuals or bodies of men within the Church, either those who on account of their official character and work should give specific guarantees of orthodoxy, or, on the other hand, those whose writings or actions have rendered the purity of their faith suspect. As we are writing now



with a practical purpose, we shall not bring forward in illustration of what we are saying instances other than can easily be found by reference to so accessible a book as Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum et Definitionum*, and even of these it will be enough to cite a few of the more notable. Thus in the Plenary Council of Toledo held in the year 447 those present made, by command of Pope Leo the Great, a long and full profession of faith, constructed on the lines laid down by that Pope in a dogmatic letter addressed to them.<sup>1</sup> It was directed against the errors of the Priscillianists, then spreading actively in Spain and Portugal, and was also imposed on the Synods of Braga and Lugo, which were held shortly after the Council of Toledo. In 517, when the schism which arose out of the Acacian troubles was active in the East, Pope Hormisdas drew up the formula (*Prima salus*) which bears his name, and required it to be taken by all the Orientals. This formula, commencing with a decisive acknowledgement of the Bishop of Rome's primacy over the whole Church and of the necessity of adhering to all its decrees, goes on to anathematize the principal heresies that had recently been afflicting the Church. It finishes with the words, "This my profession I have signed with my hand and directed to thee, Hormisdas, holy and venerable Pope of the city of Rome."<sup>2</sup> According to Rusticus, the Archdeacon of Rome who accompanied Pope Vigilius to Constantinople some twenty years later, the formula of Hormisdas was subscribed by some

<sup>1</sup> Denzinger, *ibid.* No. xv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* No. xx.

2,500 Oriental Bishops.<sup>1</sup> Another ancient Profession of Faith which stands out prominently is the Symbol of St. Leo IX (1049—1054)<sup>2</sup> imposed on some leading heretics of his time, which is interesting, not merely on account of its ancient origin, for it is traceable back to the fourth century and earlier, but because it is that which, cut up into portions and cast into an interrogatory form, is administered to every Bishop consecrated by the Roman Pontifical ; and also makes the first part of the long form of Profession subscribed by the Eastern Emperor, Michael Palæologus, and the other Eastern Bishops present at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274—the latter part of the same consisting of clauses bearing on the doctrinal errors that prevailed in the East.<sup>3</sup> We may cite also the Profession imposed by Innocent III (1210) on those of the Waldenses who sought reconciliation with the Church,<sup>4</sup> or those drawn up by Gregory XIII for the Greeks (1575),<sup>5</sup> or Urban VIII for the Armenians.<sup>6</sup> An instance of a form imposed on a particular heretic who had shown himself insincere in previous retractations is that drawn up by St. Gregory VII for Berengarius in 1079 ;<sup>7</sup> nor, on account of its notoriety and close bearing on the present crisis, must we pass over the form of Profession drawn up by Alexander VII, and annexed to his Constitution, *Regiminis apostolici* (February 15, 1664) :

I, N . . . submit myself to the Apostolic Constitution of Innocent X [viz., his *Cum occasione*, by which the five propositions

<sup>1</sup> *Contra Acephalos disputatio*, Migne PP LI., vol. 67, col. 1,251.

<sup>2</sup> Denzinger, *ibid.* No. xxxix.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* No. lix.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* No. liii.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* No. lxxxiii.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* No. lxxxiv.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* No. xl.

extracted from the *Augustinus* of Cornelius Jansen were condemned], dated May 31, 1653, and the Constitution of Alexander VII [*Ad sanctam Petri sedem*, which confirmed the Constitution of Innocent X], dated October 16, 1665; and with a sincere mind I reject and condemn the five propositions extracted from the book *Augustinus* of Cornelius Jansen, Bishop of Ypres, in the sense intended by the same author, as the Apostolic See has condemned them by the aforesaid Constitutions; and so I swear. So may God help me, and these His holy Gospels.<sup>1</sup>

But—in view of the place it holds in the administration of the Church—far more important than those we have cited, or than any that have come into existence subsequently to the Nicene Creed, is the Creed, as it is often called, of Pius IV. The Council of Trent in its *Sessio 24 de Reformatione*, cap. xiii, had decreed that all who should in future be appointed to any benefices to which cure of souls was attached and likewise all appointed to canonries or dignities in Cathedral churches, should, within two months of obtaining possession, under the conditions there prescribed, make under oath a public profession of the orthodox faith and promise to remain in obedience to the Roman Church. The Council did not itself prescribe any particular form of Profession, but it was to supply this want that Pius IV drew up, and promulgated by his Constitution *Injunctum nobis* of March 20, 1565, this Creed, which begins with the Nicene Creed but adds many clauses based on the Decrees of Trent and directed against the principal errors of that time, that is, against the fundamental errors of Protestantism.<sup>2</sup> Pius IV also extended the obligation of swearing to it, on their appointment to office, to Religious Superiors of all kinds.

Denzinger, No. xci.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* No lxxxii.

Further, by virtue of the Council of Trent, as supplemented by the legislation of the *Injunctum nobis*, or of other subsequent Constitutions or diocesan injunctions, this Creed of Pius IV must be recited and subscribed under oath by all who attend their diocesan synods, and likewise by all Professors of Theology or Philosophy, not to speak of others. As this law has been enforced ever since, it is impossible for the clergy, though it may be for the laity, not to know how deep-rooted and far-reaching in the Catholic Church is the practice of swearing and subscribing to long and detailed doctrinal statements, which have been drawn up and imposed under the authority of the Holy See.

And this all the more, because apart from and underlying the imposition of these particular forms of profession is the principle which we find explicitly recognized as far back as the Second General Council, if not earlier, that "those who pass from heresy to orthodoxy" (it instances Arians, Macedonians, Sabbatians, Novatians, Quartodecimans, Appollinarians; that is, the adherents of the notable heresies of the time) ". . . must not be received without having first anathematized in writing all the heresies which dissent from the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of God."<sup>1</sup> Of the many testimonies which show that this principle has been recognized and enforced all through, we must be content to adduce two only, the *Corpus Juris*, which cites as authorities St. Leo the Great and St. Gregory the Great;<sup>2</sup> and the

<sup>1</sup> Can. viii.

<sup>2</sup> Caus. i. quaest. 7, cap. 9, can. xx., xxi.

*Pontificale Romanum*, which in its *Ordo ad reconciliandum hæreticum* provides that, if the person just reconciled has been deemed an heresiarch or the chief author of any heresy (a category in which must come all from whom it is advisable to extract a definite and detailed retractation) he is to make the following profession, kneeling before the Pontiff: "I, recognizing the true Catholic and Apostolic Faith, anathematize here publicly every heresy, especially that by which I have hitherto been dishonoured, which seeks to maintain [*this* or *that*]. And I adhere to the Holy Roman Church, and I profess to the Apostolic See with lips and heart that I believe [*this* or *that*]." Those who bear this principle in mind will understand that the numerous lists of which Denzinger's *Enchiridion* is full, are intended not merely to inform the faithful generally of what is condemned by the Holy See, but also to furnish definite forms which the authors of the condemned propositions, if they wish to submit to the authority of the Church, may be required to subscribe, as for instance were the Abbé Bautain and his followers in 1840.<sup>1</sup>

It was necessary to call attention, in some such slight summary as we have given, to this invariable method of the Catholic Church in dealing with the heterodox among her children. It was necessary in order to show that Pius X, in exacting this new oath, is very far indeed from making a new departure in Catholic administration. It is, in fact, the Modernists themselves who are

<sup>1</sup> Denzinger, *ibid.* No. cxxiii.

demanding from him a new departure of a momentous kind which, supposing he were to grant it—or rather supposing the Holy Spirit were to let him grant it—would undermine the very foundations of the Catholic Church, with the effect of transforming it from a Church constituted on Catholic principles to a Church constituted on rationalistic principles. Catholicism—and its assailants should be aware of so obvious a fact—is based on four principles which form a sequence—namely, revelation, faith, tradition, Church authority sustained by Divine guidance. By the side of human reason and the far-reaching speculations in which it can indulge with more or less success, Catholicism believes that we have revelation as a more secure and more far-reaching channel for the attainment of religious truth. Reason it acknowledges to be in one sense ultimate, since it is the nearest to ourselves, so that revelation, if accorded to us by God, must present to reason its sufficient credentials, before it can claim to be received as a trustworthy witness for what it affirms. What has happened then is this. First God, through Jesus Christ, whose divine mission and origin He authenticated through decisive signs addressed to reason, has *revealed* truths hidden wholly or partly from the ken of human reason. Secondly, man has made the required response by an exercise of *faith*, that is, by accepting the truths revealed, on the rational basis that, God's knowledge being more full and more sure than man's, man should submit his judgement to God's revealed word. Thirdly, since the revelation made

by God through Christ is essentially an historical fact belonging to a definite date in the past, if its contents were to reach the future generations, this could only be through the medium of a *tradition*, which handed down through the succession of generations the needful facts of the earthly life and teaching of Jesus Christ—after the manner in which all other historical facts are handed down. Fourthly, since a tradition of this kind entrusted with truths so sublime, so complex, and so delicate, would inevitably have become corrupt and perished if left to the accidents of human action, God provided for its safe preservation by forming the followers of Jesus Christ into a Church held together by an organized teaching *authority*; to which all must submit, and can rationally submit, because in the discharge of its teaching office it is guarded by a special overruling providence of the Holy Spirit.

This is Catholicism, and this explains what to outsiders seems so strange and improper in the attitude of the Church authority to the theories purporting to be in conflict with her doctrines which spring up one after another in the schools of philosophy, science, or history. Why does Rome not yield to these arguments which to all of us appear so decisive? What else can explain her resistance to such clear light save a blind obstinacy carried to the lengths of downright intellectual dishonesty? One answer to this challenge, and one that is mostly sufficient of itself, is that she knows from long experience how ephemeral these antagonistic theories are wont to be, and that she has scholars of her own

who are not so obtuse as they are declared to be, and can usually distinguish between what is sound and unsound in these theories, so as to appropriate the former for the elucidation of Catholic doctrine, and anticipate the adverse judgement of the future about the latter. Still, her radical answer in all these cases is that she consults her own doctrinal tradition, in the consciousness that in it she has the truth entrusted to her by our Lord Jesus Christ. If this is adverse to some theory in fashion for the moment she rejects the theory not in the name of the direct reasons she can oppose to it, but in the name of the tradition itself, which she knows cannot fail her. And this again is what justifies her in imposing professions of faith on her members, and demanding of them interior assent. She is putting no pressure on their consciences by demanding it, for she asks it in the name of the tradition, in other words, of our Lord Jesus Christ who is its Author, and whose word is a surer guarantee of truth than any mere speculations of the human reason.

On the other hand, if there are those who, though regarding themselves as Catholics, do not trust the Church's *magisterium* or believe in the validity of her tradition, it is natural that they should resent being called upon to subscribe to these professions, and, under the cover of a misuse of the term "conscience," should plead the superior claims of their own personal judgements. But what then? They may love much that is characteristic and distinctive of the Catholic Church, they may love her for certain of her doctrines, for her worship, for her sacraments,



for her spirituality, for the saintliness of so many of her children, for the vastness and cohesion of her communion, for the marvels of her splendid history ; but for all that, as long as they reject her authority and the fundamental principles on which it is based, they cannot expect her to admit them to her sacraments, and must not be surprised if by tendering to them professions of faith she takes effective means to ascertain which of them do and which of them do not, share her faith, and may be allowed to approach her altar-rails. It is an excellent method when one comes to reflect on it. In the past as in the present the adherents of new heresies have been apt to protest that they are not all alike, and so should not be classed together in one and the same condemnation. It would be hopeless for the Holy See to try to sift them out to their own satisfaction, so it leaves them to sift themselves. It says to them, " If you are really orthodox you can have no difficulty in taking this Oath, which specifies the condemnable matter in the new heresy. If you tell me you cannot take it, my only course is to treat you as heterodox."

2. And if it is thus she has met the heresies of the past, and by so doing kept her fold free from their contamination, is it surprising that Pius X should have wished to meet the present serious crisis, which Modernism has provoked, by a drastic application of the same method? It is futile to say, as some have said, that not all the propositions branded in the new Oath, or in the *Pascendi* and *Lamentabili*, to which it refers, touch

on matters which are *de fide*. In the first place, the implication is unfounded; the Pope's power to protect the faith would be miserably ineffective if it did not extend to matters so closely connected with the faith that only mental inconsistency could affirm them without simultaneously denying the faith. And in the second place, even if we take one by one the propositions condemned in these two Papal documents and the Oath which summarizes them, there are few which do not amount to downright heresy; whilst if we take them all together, as they are intended to be taken, they form a system which is not only against the faith, but strikes at the most fundamental elements of the faith, and has been described by the Pope with obvious justice as a "congeries of all heresies" (*conlectum omnium hæresum*). Indeed, the creed of Calvinism as set forth in the Westminster Confession itself is not so much opposed to Catholicism as is Modernism, even in the form in which the *soi-disant* Catholic Modernists propound it. Catholicism bears, we may say, to the Westminster Confession the relation of a well-formed human body to one that is deformed. Catholicism bears to Modernism the relation of a living human body to one from which the spirit of life has fled, to one therefore that, if it still retains the outer form which the quickening spirit gave, will soon yield it to the forces of decay.

If any are disposed to deny this, do they realize in what Modernism—the Modernism repudiated by the new Oath—consists? We need not discuss it now, for our present subject is the lawfulness of professions of faith imposed under oath by

authority ; and besides, so much has been written on Modernism during the last two years that its true nature can be learnt by any one who will be at the pains to study it. But to take just its root-ideas. Modernism professes to be a reinterpretation of Catholicism (we confine ourselves to the " Catholic " Modernists) required to enable modern minds to assimilate it. The phrase itself is admissible. It would be useless to give the Catechism of the Council of Trent to a Kaffir ; you must interpret it to him by translating its ideas into forms that he can understand ; and doubtless an analogous process is required if we are to get men trained in modern rationalistic schools to understand what we really mean by our Catholic doctrines and practices. But on the lips of the Modernists reinterpretation means something quite different. It means retaining the traditional terminology, but under the cover thus secured substituting for the doctrinal conceptions which it has hitherto expressed conceptions quite different and even opposite ; it means taking away conceptions which have a supreme spiritual value for us, and giving us in exchange conceptions in which we can find no spiritual value at all. From as far back as the author of the Book of Wisdom, indeed from a time much more remote than that, we have been taught to believe that the arguments from causality, as they are called, give us a firm assurance of the existence of a Personal God, all-wise, all-holy, all-loving, all-powerful, supreme. It is a conception of the highest spiritual value. But Modernism would shut us up in subjectivism, telling us that at best

those time-honoured arguments suffice to justify an aspiration, a conjecture. And then, to supply for the deficiency of this conjecture, it offers us the theory of a supposed sense of religion springing up within us from the depths of subconsciousness. So interpreted, this sense is a treacherous foundation on which to build. We are asked, in fact, to remove our religion, with all its splendid hopes, from the firm rock to set it on the quicksand. This new construction, this so-called re-interpretation, has no value for us at all. We are asked to transform our belief in Jesus Christ, to believe that, when we worship Him as God, we are not worshipping a real historical personage who is God and really became Man, but only an ideal personage—in other words, an ideal, created by the pious illusions of the early Christian generations, who misconceived in their ignorance what they had heard of the Christ of history. Our Catholic conception of Jesus Christ has supreme value for us. This which is offered to us in exchange, as a reinterpretation, has no value for us at all. We have been taught that Jesus Christ, the historical Christ, before His Ascension, founded a Church to last through the ages ; that He enriched it with a store of holy doctrines and priceless sacraments, and secured their preservation by placing us under a succession of pastors who hold their authority from Him, and can count on the unfailing guardianship of His Holy Spirit. But Modernism assures us that this is all wrong ; that the historical Christ merely originated a religious movement the ultimate issues of which He could not foresee and did not provide

for ; that our traditional doctrines and sacraments are not from Him, but are conceptions formed and symbols devised and elaborated by the reflection of successive generations, which eventually acquired a certain fixity ; that the Church's hierarchy likewise is of purely human origin, the outcome of the realization of what was required to secure organization and permanency, the authority which it exercises being derived from those it is set over and revocable at their pleasure. Once more, what we have hitherto held is of priceless value to us, what this reinterpretation offers us in exchange is of no value at all.

Such being the nature of Modernism it is manifest that it cannot be tolerated in those who wish to remain in the communion of the Catholic Church. But would it not have been sufficient to condemn it and forbid the sacraments to those who refused to give it up, trusting to their honour that, greatly as they might feel the loss, they would not wish to steal the offices and sacraments of the Church by practising deception on the authorities set to guard them? It might well have seemed so, but unfortunately the evidence is too strong that this party which wishes to corrupt our doctrines for us has embarked on a deliberate policy of such deception. Mindful, we may imagine, of the lesson taught them by the " Old Catholicism " of forty years ago, they have felt that to organize themselves into a new schism would be to invite the disaster of a speedy collapse, and so their plan is to remain where they are, in the hopes of gradually leavening with their ideas the ranks of both clergy and laity.

There are Modernists and Modernists ; a Right Wing which is so near us that we mourn and marvel to see them carried away by this unfortunate movement, and a Left Wing hard to distinguish from the adherents of rabid anti-clericalism. It is this Left Wing, no doubt, which is engaged in the clandestine policy of leavening to which we are referring, and we may avail ourselves of Professor Luzzi's article in the *Hibbert Journal* for January, 1911, as witnessing to the results which they claim to have achieved.

Modernism [he writes] has permeated everywhere [in Italy] : seminaries, monasteries, town and country parishes, through reviews, translations of foreign works, newspapers, pamphlets, secret circulars, it has carried everywhere the breath of new hopes, of new ideas, of new aspirations. I know many cells in different convents ; I have entered the homes of many priests in the country and town ; I know well what the young think in more than one seminary ; and am therefore in a position to state that of a hundred clerics from forty years of age onwards, no less than sixty keep most jealously in their private desks the best products of Modernist literature. The now suppressed reviews . . . are secretly read over by the young clergy. The *Programme of the Modernists*, the *Letters of a Modernist Priest*, the *Battles of to-day (Le Battaglie d'oggi)*, a periodical which warmly discusses the most practical and delicate questions (compulsory celibacy, &c.) . . . circulate freely among the young priesthood. . . . And at every moment vigorous circulars and pamphlets such as *Unità e Libertà*, *La Vita della Chiesa*, *Che cosa vogliamo*, *Crisi d'anime nel Cattolicesimo*, *Il Celibato*, pass through the ranks of the clergy like sudden peals of thunder, and keep more than ever awake the expectant multitude.

And again, in a citation of the testimony of a witness alleged to be behind the scenes :

The Vatican has in its possession hundreds of documents proving that in the Roman Catholic Church there exists at present a secret Modernist organization, and that a sort of Freemasonry has been formed in order to foster and spread Modernism. The Vatican has succeeded in finding out that a clandestine Modernist correspondence is kept up between some churches, and even between various seminaries. It knows, for instance, that from some seminaries circulars and writings are periodically issued

in favour of Modernism. Whoever thinks that Modernism is dead or about to die is grossly mistaken.

We are not obliged to take Professor Luzzi's testimony as unimpeachable. Elsewhere in his article he commends the present Mayor of Rome, the notorious Nathan, as "a noble-minded man and a great patriot," and characterizes his recent speech at the Porta Pia as "an eloquent eulogy of civil and religious liberty." A writer who can express himself thus discounts his credibility till there is little of it left. Still, of what he says about this underhand campaign for the corruption of the clergy, sufficient is doubtless true to explain and justify the action of Pius X in enforcing so generally on the clergy this searching Oath. It will constrain them to declare themselves. And perhaps, then, it may appear that their number—like that of the 180 priests in England, who a few years ago were said to be on the point of seceding—falls far short of the prediction.

True, it has been suggested that, to escape detection, many of them will take the Oath with their lips, whilst dissenting from its affirmations as much as ever in their hearts. Thus, if we may trust the *Geneva Revue Moderniste Internationale* for November, 1910, "some French Modernist priests" sent in the previous October "to all the Archbishops and Bishops of France" a copy of an unsigned letter addressed to these prelates, of which the following is the concluding paragraph:

For these motives and many others which it would take too long to enumerate, numerous ecclesiastics belonging to all the dioceses have resolved to perform the act imposed by the Constitution *Sacrorum Antistitum* and, both under the present circumstances

and under any others of a like nature that may further present themselves, to go through the formality of the oath.

But before submitting to this violence, they wish to protest before God, before the Church, and before you, Monseigneur, that by this act they do not bind their conscience, or modify in any way their ideas; and that, until better informed, they remain to-day what they were yesterday, and, reserving their interior complete and absolute adhesion, the adhesion of their whole souls, for what is of the essence of the faith, they content themselves in other respects, as far as is possible, with observing a respectful silence.

Stripped of its euphemistic verbiage, what this protest means is that, to retain their clerical appointments and thus be the better enabled to disseminate their heresies, these writers propose whenever this Oath is tendered to them, to call God to witness that they believe sincerely what in their hearts they disbelieve altogether; and, entering through this gate of sinful perjury, to swell the ranks of the hitherto rare clerical offenders who lead double lives, hiding their secret misconduct behind the screen of an outward compliance with the Church's teaching. It is hard to understand how persons professing to be actuated in their resistance to Church authority by high moral principles, can descend to a course of conduct which must bring down on them the reproaches of all upright men, but no doubt it will add very seriously to the anxieties of the Church's rulers, and the spiritual perils of her children, if there is in future to be this group of false brethren, lurking in their midst, and seeking to corrupt their minds. Still, we may rest assured of the final issue. Over and over again has the See of Peter had to meet and conquer far more powerful foes than these, in the accomplishment of its age-long task of guarding the purity of the Faith.