

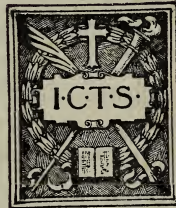
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FAITH AND REASON

BY THE

REV. BERNARD VAUGHAN, S.J.



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FAITH AND REASON

BY THE REV. BERNARD VAUGHAN, S.J.¹

THE subject of my address to you this evening is "Faith and Reason; or, the reasonableness of believing in Revelation."

And if you ask me why, among the many burning questions of the hour, I have selected this particular topic for discussion before you, in whom Faith and Reason have never, as yet, quarrelled, my answer is this:—I have been led to make choice of this theme not so much from a sense that of all others it is the most suited to yourselves, as in the hope that through you it may be helpful to others who are groping through the mists of doubt for the light of Faith. It seems to me that whilst the Rationalists are making it their business to try to persuade their fellows not only that Faith is contrary to reason, but that it leads to mental slavery, it becomes a sacred duty for Christians to point out to their fellow-countrymen that not only is Faith not incompatible with reason, but, on the contrary, most helpful to it, and especially conducive to mental freedom.

With your kind permission, then, we will see whether we cannot carry out the bidding of the Apostle, and justify what he terms "our reasonable service," by a well-reasoned account of that Faith in which it is our privilege to live, for which it was the glory of our English martyrs to die.

At the outset, the first thing we have to do is to

¹ This lecture was given at Nottingham at a Reunion of the congregations of the Diocese.

determine what we mean by Faith. By Faith, then, I mean, believing on the authority of another; that is to say, believing some proposition uttered by a witness upon whose knowledge and veracity we think it safe to rely.

If the witness to whose word the assent is given be invested with nothing more than human authority, then the resulting Faith will be merely human or natural. Whereas, if the witness to whose word adherence is given be clothed with divine authority, then our Faith will be supernatural and divine. And, let us observe, that—the formal motive of Faith in either case being not the evidence of the proposition enunciated, but the authority of the witness who propounds it—it follows that the character of the assent given will in each case be determined not by the evident truth of the proposition in itself, but by the authority attached to the character of the witness. If the witness be merely human, the assent will in most cases be conditional and revocable; if divine, it will be always absolute and irrevocable.

Respecting the difference between human and divine Faith, hear what Cardinal Newman says: "Divine Faith," writes his Eminence, "is assenting to a doctrine as true, because God says it is true, who cannot lie. And further than this: since God says it is true, not with His own voice, but by the voice of His messengers, it is assenting to what man says, not simply viewed as a man, but to what he is commissioned to declare as a messenger, prophet, or ambassador from God. In the ordinary course of this world we account things true, either because we see them, or because we can perceive that they follow and are deducible from what we do see; that is, we gain truth by sight or by reason, not by faith. You will say, indeed, that we accept a number of things which we cannot prove or see, on the word of others. Certainly; but then we accept what they say only as the word of man; and we have not commonly that absolute and unreserved confidence in them which nothing can shake. We know that man is open to mistake, and we are always glad to find some confirmation of what he says, from other quarters, in any important

matter ; or we receive his information with negligence and unconcern, as something of little consequence, as a matter of opinion, or, if we act upon it, it is as a matter of prudence, thinking it best and safest to do so. We take his word for what it is worth, and we use it either according to our necessity or its probability. We keep the decision in our own hands, and reserve to ourselves the right of reopening the question whenever we please. This is very different from Divine Faith : he who believes that God is true, and that this is His word, which He has committed to man, has no doubt at all. He is as certain that the doctrine taught is true as that God is true ; and he is certain *because* God is true, *because* God has spoken, not because he sees its truth, or can prove its truth. That is, Faith has two peculiarities ; it is most certain, decided, positive, and immovable in its assent ; and it gives this assent, not because it sees with eye, or sees with reason, but because it receives the tidings from one that comes from God."

From what you have now heard, you will easily understand why it is that the assent given upon the sole authority of man to unrevealed truth is not usually absolute and final ; and why, on the other hand, it is that the assent given upon the authority of God, using man as His ambassador, is absolute and irrevocable. Man is liable to deceive and be deceived, not so God.

And here, at this stage of our inquiry into the reasonableness of Faith, it may not be uninteresting to be reminded of the process by which the mind of man arrives at an act of Faith. Take, for instance, a convert to the Catholic Church. By what process does he come to believe that this is the Church set up by God, and is the only one that can give salvation to his soul? Well, I suppose he will start by examining the Church's credentials ; he weighs what are called "the motives of credibility." But supposing that, having investigated the Church's claims, he becomes satisfied that she and she alone is the true Church, what is it that then prevails upon him to join her communion? What persuades him to act on his conviction, and to say, "Credo," "I

believe"? Certainly not the bare fact that the arguments in her favour are cogent and convincing: for, did he so will it, he might quarrel with the conclusion, or suspend his judgement, or invite difficulties, or entertain doubts, or complain that, clear though these proofs are, they are not clearer still. The question, then, I want to have answered, is this:—What power is it that then comes to his rescue, when, after having met with many obstacles on the way, he finds himself standing before the gates of the Temple of Faith, halting between conviction and reluctance to submit? What is the name of that strange power which seems to take him by the hand, and to enable him, with the word upon his lips, "Credo," "I *do* believe," to cross the threshold, and to enter the Church?

I will tell you the name of the strange power which comes to his assistance and enables him to believe. It is the grace of God. "To believe," says St. Thomas, the Angel of the Schools, "is an act of the understanding adhering to divine truth *by command of the will which is moved by the grace of God.*"

With this explanation before us it is clear that God, as well as man, takes part in every act of Faith; and that Faith is not the natural outcome of a mere process of reasoning, but the supernatural result of man's cooperation with the grace of God. Consequently, before the neophyte can bring his mind to elicit an act of Faith—say in the Catholic Church—something over and above the mere conviction of the Church's divine descent and imperial power is needed for the mind. It must be enlightened by grace; and then the will, inspired and fortified by grace, must exert its ruling power over man, and command the understanding to give its assent and to swear eternal fealty to the truth revealed. "In order that an act of Faith be duly elicited," says Cardinal Franzelin, "it is absolutely necessary that divine grace should enlighten the understanding, and excite and strengthen the will." Faith is a supernatural act for the performance of which supernatural means are necessary. This, then, we must carefully bear in mind,

that the understanding, enlightened by grace, can then only elicit an act of Faith when it is positively moved to do so by the will under the influence of grace. Accordingly, the moral cause of every act of Faith is the will, and hence St. Augustine says : *Fides consistit in credentium voluntate* : "Faith depends upon the will of those who believe." In theological language, Faith is in the understanding as its immediate subject and eliciting principle, but in the will as its moral as well as its efficient cause. The merit of Faith consists in *firmly* but *freely* accepting, in obedience to God's word, what the human intellect cannot of itself thoroughly comprehend.

If, then, I am asked how it comes to pass that one man finds it quite easy to believe, and another quite impossible, I reply by asking : "How does it happen that one man feels it easy and another difficult to obey?" The cause of the difficulty or impossibility is to be traced in both instances to man's will. In neither case can God command what is impossible ; in either case—in believing as in obeying—the difficulty can be overcome by willing, and praying for the necessary grace. Of course, without God's assisting grace, nothing in the supernatural order can be achieved by us. We have it from His own gracious lips : "Without Me you can do nothing" ; but, given that divine help and strength, what is there a man cannot do? Do not imagine that the expression, "I can do all things in Him that strengthens me," has been monopolized by St. Paul. It is the right of every man, no matter what his native weakness, to reproduce it, and with equal certainty of its being true in his individual case. Observe : I do not pretend to say that there are no intellectual difficulties in believing or in obeying : presently we shall see there are plenty. It would be strange, indeed, if there were none such in a communion which claims the submission of a man to a teaching that embraces all spiritual and moral truth. But these difficulties do not commonly affect those who have a real desire to know the truth and to obey God's laws, and who have honestly and faithfully weighed the notes and evidences of the Church. The difficulties

which rise up before minds of this sort, and which to them appear impossible to overcome, are in reality *moral* difficulties which have their root in a disordered will; at least in a will which, whatever its other excellences, is lacking in that confiding, clinging, child-like docility to the word of God which is the very condition of the grant of the gift of Faith. Never had the world so much need, as now, of studying the full import of the words: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of God." Yes: let us be men with men; but with our Father, God, we must ever be as children, ready to listen, to learn, to believe, and to obey.

These words will, I fear, give pain to some of my friends who are as yet outside the Church; for among them are those who are persuaded that their one wish in life is to do God's will. Like St. Peter they protest that they are ready to lay down their very lives for Him. Yet, wait a little. When, like Peter's, this confident assertion is put to the test, when God points out to them, in some moment of prayer, what they must suffer for His Name's sake, if they would receive that grandest gift out of heaven—the gift of Faith—are they not wont to grow sad, to be heavy and to fear? Does there not rise almost unbidden to their lips the prayer: "If it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. I cannot drink it, it is too full, too bitter. The sacrifice asked of me is too costly: I cannot ignore the past; I cannot break with my surroundings; I cannot begin my life again! I am too poor, or too weak, or too busy, or too old. If I were alone in the world, ah! then I could drink the chalice to the dregs; but there is my wife, there are my children. Oh, if it be possible, let it all pass from me! Oh, send me Thy angel of comfort, to strengthen me with Thy grace, to breathe into my soul Thy love, and let all things be as they were before"? Fatal mistake, for men to lay down the conditions upon which they will serve God! Oh, miserable delusion of men, to fancy they are pleasing Him, where they are only pleasing themselves! Alas for the cowardice of

the human heart, which entices away the will from struggling with the flesh in prayer, after the pattern of Gethsemani, till the blessed words, "Not my will but Thine be done," leap from the heart to the lips, and resignation, peace, joy, and strength enter in and take possession of the soul! It was because Peter did not struggle in prayer with temptation that he came, in spite of his protestations, to deny his Master, for whom he had protested he was ready to die; and it is to be feared that there are many men and women in England at this day who, in spite of their natural fondness for our Lord's character, beauty, and holiness, may never come to acknowledge Him, just as Peter came to deny Him, unless they continue in prayer to struggle for light, not only to know Him but to know His law, His personal will; and for grace not only to love Him, but to love and obey his Church. Yes, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," and it is the flesh and not the reason, the things of the flesh and not the things of the spirit, which are detaining them where they are—in the outer darkness, where the light of Faith is neither seen nor understood. "Watch," then, "and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

Listen to what St. Augustine has to say upon this point. In his *Confessions* he tells us that it was not his reason that kept him back from joining the Catholic Church, but his will that would not struggle with temptation, nor implore the grace and courage he needed from God.

"Nor had I any excuse, such as I formerly pretended to when I delayed to forsake the world to serve Thee, as not having yet certainly discovered the truth; for now I was indeed certain of the truth, and yet my will was still fettered, and refused to fight under Thy banner; being as much afraid of being disengaged from all impediments as I ought to have feared being entangled in them. The burden of the world, as is the case in sleep, pleasingly kept me down; and the thoughts that prompted me to arise to Thee were but like the struggling of such as would awake, yet are still over-

come with drowsiness, and fall back into their former slumber. And as there is no man who would always sleep, but everyone's sound judgement chooses to be awake, yet oftentimes he delays to shake off sleep, while the weight of indolence benumbs his limbs, and he prefers to entertain it, though his reason tells him it is wrong, it being now high time to get up: so was it with me. For I was convinced that it was better for me to give myself up to Thy love than to yield to my own desires: but though I was pleurably convinced by the one, I was still strongly affected and captivated by the other; I had nothing now to answer to Thee, when Thou didst say to me: 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten thee.' And when on every side Thou showedst me that Thou didst speak the truth, I had nothing at all to reply, being now convinced by the truth, except some lazy, indolent, and drowsy words, 'presently,' 'by and by,' 'stay a little'; but that 'presently' did not come presently, and this 'stay a little' ran out to a long time. In vain did I delight in Thy law according to my inward man, while another law in my members resisted that law of my mind, and led me captive to the law of sin which was in my members. For the law of sin is the force of habit, with which the mind is dragged along and held against its will, yet by its deserving, because it willingly fell into it. Who then should deliver me, wretched man that I was, from the body of that death, but Thy grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord?"

In this passage, St. Augustine professes to give the true account of what it was that kept him from following the example of his newly-converted friend, Victorinus, and being, like him, admitted into the Catholic Church. Would that others could have the courage to look into themselves, and recognize the true reason which holds them where they are. Observe, "God commands nothing that is impossible."

I must repeat it, the will is at the root of their obstacles to Faith. Surely, "he who runs may read" the truth, that there cannot really be opposition between

truth and truth, though they be truths belonging to orders so different from each other as the Natural and Supernatural. No, as we shall presently see more clearly still, it is not the opposition between Faith and reason that is the cause of the unbelief, but the opposition between Grace and will. In other words, which I now repeat, men do not believe for the same reason that they do not obey. And they do not obey because they have not the *wish*, or rather the *will*, to obey. Their will is languid or indolent, or indifferent, insincere, or inordinate. *Vult et non vult piger* : "The slothful man willeth and willeth not." Consequently, my advice to one who, having become convinced of the claims of the Catholic Church, cannot see his way to submitting to them and entering, would be much the same as yours would be to a friend who should say to you that he could not keep some commandment of the moral law. Your advice, I imagine, would be this. You would say : You *must* keep the commandment ; there is no way out of it. And if you say you cannot, you must remember that obedience is the consequence of the *will* to obey. Your will is weak : pray for grace ; pray humbly, pray earnestly, pray constantly, and you will one day make the wonderful discovery that what seemed impossible, so long as God's grace was wanting, is now made easy by the assistance of that grace. In like manner should I speak to him who argued about the impossibility of submitting to Faith. I should say : But you *must* submit to it ; it is a commandment pressing quite as close upon you as those of the Decalogue. Do you not know that Faith is the consequence of the *will* to believe ? It is your will that is at fault ; you must pray humbly, earnestly, constantly, for the grace to will to believe, and, if you continue to do so, sooner or later you will be delightedly surprised to find that not only you wish to believe, but that you do in fact believe. Note well : "The *just* man *lives* by Faith."

This, then, ever bear in mind, that Faith is not a matter of strict mathematical demonstration, but a supernatural virtue by which we unhesitatingly accept what-

ever God has revealed, because He has revealed it who cannot err. It is a virtue, because there is merit in believing; it is a supernatural virtue, and consequently the free gift of God; and it is a theological virtue, because its immediate object is God, and its formal motive a divine perfection, the infinite veracity of God. If Faith made demands upon the intellect only, if it were the result of a mere process of reasoning, there would be no more merit in accepting the truths of revelation than there is in arriving at the conclusion of a proposition in Euclid. No man considers he is doing anything meritorious in assenting to a demonstrated proposition: but in assenting to an evidently credible proposition of Faith there is merit, because it is a test of the moral character of a man's whole being as well as the make and temper of his mental capacity. The reason why our Lord makes so much of Faith is precisely this: because it is the unerring test of our goodwill and docility. For the same reason St. Paul in his Epistles writes at such length about the necessity of Faith, because as it is the first of virtues, so it is the parent of them all. "*Nulla est vera virtus,*" writes St. Thomas, "*sine fide*"—there is no true virtue without faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "It is the substance of things hoped for, and the argument of things that appear not."

And now, having told you what Faith is, and how men come to believe, we will let our adversaries speak, and tell you how it is (so they say) they *do not* come to believe.

They say, then, they cannot believe in the truths of revelation, because to believe, on the word of another, what we cannot ourselves prove, is to put reason in fetters—it is mental slavery. This objection against Faith, which in one form or another is so often made to do duty against Catholic doctrine, may sound plausible at first, but I undertake to show it is very shallow, and as cowardly as it is unfair.

In the first place, ought not a moment's reflection to suggest to our adversaries this question? If it is so

very unreasonable to submit to the word of authority, how comes it that hundreds of millions of our fellow-beings, quite as intellectually gifted as we are, and quite as devoted to truth and liberty, find no such opposition between Faith and reason as we fancy we have discovered? Surely these Rationalists, who pride themselves on their unbelief, can scarcely delude themselves into imagining that they have the monopoly of reason and freedom. They can hardly venture to persuade themselves that their forefathers, who formed their language, framed their laws, founded their universities, faced their enemies, and fought their battles, were of so mean an intellectual make, that for more than a thousand years they bowed before the tyrannical rule of Faith, and meekly submitted to have its fetters placed upon their reason?

Do not tell me that lovers of freedom, such as they who wrested from a despotic king the Magna Charta—that great charter of our liberties; who established trial by jury, who created our representative system, who were up and ready at Poitiers, Harfleur, Crecy, and Agincourt to defend our real or imagined rights, were made of such poor stuff that they were ready, on the offer of a bribe, to barter away freedom for slavery! To these intellectual giants who have made the stupendous discovery that submission to authority in matters of religion is the annihilation of reason and the destruction of freedom, I should like to put one question. I would fain ask them how, if this be so, do they save their own reason and freedom from meeting with a similar fate? For I charge them, one and all, with doing themselves precisely what they condemn so scornfully in others. From the cradle to the grave are they not being anxiously guided throughout their secular life by the leading strings of authority? I put it to them. When they were yet children, was it not on the authority of their mother's word that they believed some things were good for them and others would do them harm, that one line of conduct was right and another wrong? And when they grew to be of an age to leave the nursery and

go to school, was it not still on the word of authority that they learnt there was a right and a wrong way of parsing their sentences or construing the author set before them? Was it not to the authority of their teacher that they looked for the truth of all the multitude of miscellaneous facts which came before them in the course of their studies? And did they innovate upon this time-honoured practice, when from school they passed on to the university? Nay, I will ask them further: does the period in life *ever* arrive, when they can afford to fling away the crutches lent them by authority, and walk by their own strength? When they are sick, is it their practice to dictate to the physician in attendance upon them the line of treatment he must prescribe in their case; or do they leave themselves to be guided by his authority? If they find themselves entangled in a lawsuit, do they quarrel with their solicitor because they cannot understand all the intricacies of the law; or do they submit to be ruled by his judgement? Such instances might be multiplied; but surely these are enough to make it clear that if Catholics are to be condemned as nothing better than slaves because they elect to be guided in their spiritual life by authority, then worldly men are under the same condemnation for submitting to be led by authority in their secular lives.

They may traverse the assertion, and deny that they are so led. Let me then quote in support of the charge what Mr. Gladstone has to say upon this point. He says: "The fact to which we ought all to be alive, but for the most part are not, is that the whole human family, and the best and the highest races of it, and the best and highest minds of those races, are to a great extent upon the crutches which authority has lent them."

If, then, the majority of the human race—the working class, the middle class, as well as the professional class—are so hard pressed in the race of life, that they must be satisfied with book-knowledge in place of the knowledge of experience, and with what accredited authorities say or write, or are reported to say or write,

upon special subjects, if they would have knowledge of these matters, surely it is nothing less than mockery to tell these same men that they are slaves if, in the more difficult subject of religion, they accept any point of doctrine which they have not themselves proved by processes of conclusive reasoning. "Inquiry is a way to Truth, and Authority is a way to Truth—identical in aim, diverse in means." What say our objectors to this? They say: "Ah, but your religion is involved in mystery; and with mystery, as men of light and leading, we refuse to have anything to do." Faith, then, it seems, must be thrust aside and sent to the wall, because it involves mystery. If so, upon what plea, I ask, do they retain the sciences in their service? For by scientific men I am told that, as Religion without mystery is absurd, so science without mystery is unknown. And, as a matter of fact, can these paragons of learning, who are so sweeping in their condemnation of men of Faith, tell me what they themselves are able to know about the ultimate component parts of matter? Or can they give me any reliable information about the origin, nature, or cause, say of gravitation, magnetism, or electricity? Or have they as yet unravelled that mysterious something we call life? Or can they explain why it is that a human being unconsciously inhales and exhales breath 23,000 times a day, or why the heart goes on beating, and never breaks down like other engines, for a whole lifetime? Or why there are more than 800,000,000 of air cells in a pair of lungs? Or why some of the plants called fungi are so small that 200,000,000, of them, set side by side, would not cover one square inch of ground; and yet that each of them possesses an inherent vitality which under favourable circumstances will burst into life and reproduce the parent plant? To these questions the self-elected leaders of modern thought and science can give no answer. What then are achievements of science, and whither has the march of time brought them? What have you gained by all your toil in the laboratory, dissecting-room, and observatory, with your telescopes,

microscopes, spectroscopes, test tubes, and scalpels? In the words of Moignô I will answer for you: "*La multiplication des inconnues et des mystères.*" You have but added to the catalogue of mysteries which surround you. For our forefathers, the material world was a quadruple mystery made up of four elements—earth, water, air, fire. For us, it is a mystery involving not four but sixty-four other mysteries; a mystery changing what was the simple mystery of water into the complex mystery of hydrogen and oxygen, converting what was known as air into the mysteries of nitrogen, oxygen, carbonic acid, ammonia, carburetted and sulphuretted hydrogen, hydrochloric acid, carbonic oxide, sulphurous and sulphuric acid, nitric acid, and most probably iodine. With an array of mysteries such as these facing the rationalist, what possible right has he to inveigh against the mysteries of religion? Would it not be more candid, more generous, in him to acknowledge, with Leibnitz: "What is contrary to mysteries in us is not reason or natural light: it is corruption, it is error, it is prejudice, it is darkness." "In science," wrote Jules Simon, "as often as we make a step forward, we find an abyss; it is only weak minds that believe they can explain all and understand all." "My life," said Bayle, "is passed at the bottom of an abyss, in the midst of mysteries." And is it not from the lips of a scientific man that has been forced the declaration that "from the region of disorderly mystery, which is the domain of ignorance, another vast province has been added to science, the region of orderly mystery"? "Time," "Space," "Causation," "Matter," "Spirit," "Light," "Sound," "Ether"—behold here some samples of your orderly mysteries!

There is an axiom of the schools which says: *Qui nimium probat, nihil probat*: "he who proves too much, proves nothing." I recommend our adversaries to emblazon this motto upon the walls of their lecture halls; it might serve to remind them to proceed cautiously in their assertions against the reasonableness of Faith. Perhaps it might even suggest to them the

propriety of consulting some authority—say St. Thomas of Aquin—as to what men of faith have to say for themselves about the truths they hold so tenaciously. Our scientists might then find that St. Thomas has this to say in the first instance, that infidelity as well as faith is in the understanding in its immediate subject, but in the will as in its first mover; that it is the contemptuousness of the will which causes the dissent of the understanding, and that in this dissent it is that infidelity essentially consists. Hence the cause of infidelity is in the will, although infidelity itself is in the understanding. Infidelity having its cause in the will, is, like Faith, a free act. Therefore, it is imputable. Faith is a virtue, and infidelity a vice. Yes: unbelief now, as always, is the outcome of some vice of character. But we must remember that vice is not always gross. It may be very subtle and refined in its character, and be allied with many most estimable natural virtues. The vice from which unbelief issues is always pride, intellectual pride—and this vice is the fatal barrier which hinders Faith from making its way in the soul. “Pride is the beginning of all sin”; and “the beginning of the pride of man is, to fall off from God,” *i.e.*, Apostasy. The proper attitude of man towards God is that of intense humility. It is not for him to lay down conditions to God, without the fulfilment of which he will not submit himself to divine teaching. He ought, on the contrary, even if God to him is as yet only a hypothetical God, to be ever saying in his heart: “O God, I accept Thy conditions; only make Thyself known to me, by such evidences as in Thy estimation are sufficient, and dispose my mind and heart to rest upon them with satisfaction and contentment. *Domine, quid vis me facere?* “Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?” *Domine ut videam*: “Lord, that I may see.” When this disposition is joined with equally intense earnestness to know the Truth, then the light of Faith, sooner or later, will shed abroad its beams within his soul, and become “a lamp to his feet and light to his paths.”

I think we may now say that we have satisfied our

own minds, at least, that in taking the authority of Faith for our guide in religion, we are no more putting fetters on our reason than the rest of men, who claim to be mentally free ; that in acting as we do, we are not out of joint but in harmony with all around us. In a word, if we believe in a personal God at all, we are fully justified in concluding that as He has provided us, upon our entrance into this world, with masters to teach and guide us through the days of our infancy and youth, with physicians to treat and heal us when sick, with lawyers to advise and help us when perplexed, with scientists to instruct and warn us when inquisitive, so, too, that He has provided, no less, for the wants of our souls. We are justified in concluding that he has made ready for us teachers to guide us through the days of our spiritual life, physicians to cure us of our spiritual sickness, moralists to solve our difficulties and doubts, directors to guide us on the narrow way to life, and to allay our scruples and our fears. Men who neglect the authoritative voice of their teachers, who give no heed to the advice of their physicians, who are deaf to the warnings of science, come in the end to fill our hospitals, crowd our gaols, or they sicken and die prematurely from one disease or another, to which they might have been strangers had they been less headstrong, less self-willed, more prudent and docile. In like manner, men who neglect the warnings of religion, who despise the admonitions and teachings of faith, come at last to fall a prey to sicknesses from which there is no cure, and to fill a prison from which there is no egress; they sicken and die from the effects of a moral disease to which they, too, might have been strangers had they been less proud and self-willed, and more humble and docile. The fault is their own. "You *will not* come to Me," said our Lord to the Jews who neglected His warnings and His teachings. Why did they hold aloof? Because they "love darkness rather than light, for their works are evil." "Thou hast appointed darkness, and it is night, in it shall all the beasts of the woods go about."

We have thus satisfied ourselves that Faith, rightly understood, can never quarrel with reason, and that there are *à priori* reasons for coming to the conclusion that Faith was meant by God, not to be a sentinel arresting the march of reason, but a divine guide leading it onwards and upwards, to a land where no more shall we "see through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face." Yes, "now we know in part, and prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." "The God of Gods shall be seen in Sion"; we shall look upon the face of Him Whom we had pierced; we shall gaze upon the face of the Triune God, and shall be pierced through and through, like a glittering gem of loveliness, with the life, the light, and the love of the living and loving God. We shall partake of His nature—of His glory there, as of His grace here—of the eternity of His duration, of the spotlessness of His sanctity, of the tenderness of His mercy, of the might of His power, of the wealth of His knowledge, of the charms of His beauty, of the bliss of His love for ever and for ever—for there, in Heaven, "the former things are passed away."

It now only remains for us to inquire what the voice of history has to say about Faith. What part has Faith played in the history of the human Family? Well, when I interrogate history, it tells me that, under the Old Dispensation the followers of Monotheism took the word of the patriarchs and prophets, who, from time to time, rose up amongst them to be the authoritative voice of the living God. They followed it: and in so doing were persuaded they were obeying the Divine Will. I contemplate the faith and obedience of Noe, who during many years toiled at the Ark of Divine command in the presence of infidel scoffers. I find recorded the faith that led Abraham out from country and kindred into a land which he knew not. I then arrive at the distinct Mosaic revelation. There I find multiplied obediences, attending every department of the faithful Israelite's existence, at the guidance and bidding of a priesthood representing the Deity. I find penalties,

even to death, denounced upon "those who believed not," and therefore would not obey. The earth, which our men of science would have obedient only to material cosmic laws, opens her mouth opportunely, to swallow up the unbeliever and the rebel against God's appointed teachers and vicegerents. The astronomic laws seem to be reversed, that daylight may be lengthened for the defeat and slaughter of infidel hosts.

And when the Old Dispensation made way for the New, and Jesus of Nazareth, who by the fulfilment of prophecy and the seal of His miracles proved He was Divine as well as human, when He came down and dwelt among us, did He innovate upon this system established for the acquisition of religious truths? Did the Son of Man at any time or anywhere give out: "Accept nothing which you cannot yourselves prove: believe nothing which transcends your powers of imagination, hold nothing which involves mystery?" Did He declare that His followers were to be distinguished from such as had gone before, by substituting private judgement for the judgement of those who claimed to teach in His Name and with His voice? The very reverse. Emphatically, peremptorily, uniformly, He commissioned His ambassadors, promising to be with them by His power and grace till time was swallowed up in eternity. He bade them teach all religious truth, to teach the nations, to teach every creature, and to make disciples of all. His Church was to be composed of two parts, each responding to the other, each the complement of the other—the Church teaching and the Church taught. His representatives were to be teachers like Himself, "with authority, and not as the Scribes": not theorists, nor "guessers at truth," but witnesses, ministers, ambassadors, clothed with His authority, speaking with His voice. "As the Father has sent Me, so I send you." "Ye shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth." "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." "And behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the

world." As He commissioned some to teach, He commanded others to learn. Nay, He went further. He bade His witnesses to regard such as would not hear the Church, in the light of heathens and publicans. And yet more: against those who obstinately refused to receive and hear His witnesses, our Lord pronounced an awful condemnation: "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words; going forth out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet." Then He added those words which have echoed through the ages: "Amen, I say to you it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement, than for that city." Surely, if there is any meaning in the words at all, if language is the expression of thought and the symbol of will, no one who believes in the Bible can say that the Son of Man has left the acceptance of authority in matters of religion an open question. On the contrary, He has made it a test, and an unerring test, of discipleship, and the very condition of man's escape from the fate of those who were destroyed in the wicked cities of the plain. The words are unmistakable, the language emphatic, the tone imperative. And in this sense have they always been understood by the Church. St. Paul, for example, in none of his Epistles bases his teachings on processes of reasoning. On the contrary, he distinctly declares: "To us God hath revealed them by His Spirit. For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him? So the things also that are of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit that is of God: that we may know the things that are given us from God. Which things also we speak, not in the learned words of human wisdom, but in the doctrine of the Spirit."

No; "the Apostles," as Cardinal Newman observes, "did not rest their cause on argument: they did not rely on eloquence, wisdom, or reputation, they did not resolve Faith into sight and reason; they contrasted it with both, and bade their hearers believe, sometimes in

spite, sometimes in default, sometimes in aid, of sight and reason. They came as commissioned from Him 'Whom they [their hearers] ignorantly worshipped,' and declared that mankind was a guilty and outcast race; that sin was misery; that the world was a snare, that life was a shadow; that God was everlasting, and that His law was holy and true, and its sanction certain and terrible; that He also was all-merciful; that He had appointed a Mediator between Him and them, who had removed all obstacles, and was desirous to restore them; and that He had sent themselves to explain how. They said that that Mediator had come and gone; but had left behind Him what was to be His representative till the end of all things, His mystical body, the Church, in joining which lay the salvation of the world."

Even such words, as I have uttered ought to satisfy our adversaries that in submitting to the authority of Faith in matters of religion, Catholics are not necessarily more slavish, or childish, or irrational, than the rest of the human family; that in concluding from their belief in a Personal God, from the immortality of the soul, and a life hereafter in the sight of God, to the necessity of some such spiritual guidance being provided for them, they are but extending to the spiritual world a law which is recognized to exist in the natural; and that in submitting, by virtue of their belief in the Divinity of Christ and the Inspiration of the Scriptures, to the word of the Catholic Church as the voice of God, they are but doing that which conscience no less than reason points out to be their bounden duty as logically-minded Christian men. Indeed, it is hard to discover any *locus standi* between a revealed religion and no religion at all; nor can one imagine what may be that process of reasoning by which a man contrives to justify himself in the extremely perilous experiment of balancing himself equidistant between Catholicity and infidelity. Between these two, what is there but a well-worn, well-polished inclined plane, upon which he who is not struggling upwards must be gliding downwards? Unless he be possessed of quite exceptional powers as a mental acrobat, he shall

hardly find a standpoint between them. How shall he brave such imminent risk to the life of his soul? Nor am I alone in this view of his situation. Cardinal Newman, whom Mr. Gladstone speaks of as "one of the world's greatest minds," has thus recorded of himself: "I came to the conclusion that there was no medium in true philosophy between atheism and catholicity, and that a perfectly consistent mind, under these circumstances in which it finds itself here below, must embrace either one or the other; and I hold this still: I am a Catholic by virtue of my believing in One God." In this remarkable passage you have the candid confession of "one of the world's greatest minds," that he can discover no medium between the Catholic religion and no religion at all. He has embraced the Catholic Faith, and with what result? Does the Cardinal feel his great intellect to be in fetters, or has he discovered that he exchanged freedom for slavery, or faith for reason? Hear him speak again: "From the day I became a Catholic," he writes in his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, "now close upon thirty years, I have never had a moment's misgiving that the communion of Rome is that Church which the Apostles set up at Pentecost, which alone has the adoption of sons, and the glory and the covenant, and the promises, and in which the Anglican communion, whatever its merits and demerits, whatever the excellence of individuals in it, has as such, no part. Nor have I ever for a moment hesitated in my conviction since 1845, that it was my clear duty to join that Catholic Church, as I did then join it, which in my conscience I felt to be divine. Never for a moment have I wished myself back; never have I ceased to thank my Maker for His mercy in enabling me to make the great change, and never has He let me feel forsaken by Him, or in distress, or in any kind of religious trouble."

I might cite other authorities by hundreds in confirmation of the Cardinal's words, but I will not detain you. There is however one, just one more, whose testimony I will seek, and he is one who tried the *via media*. He was, if I may say so, like a traveller who, beguiled

away from the beaten track along a treacherous coastline, finds himself suddenly clinging instinctively to some chance ledge of a steep and slippery cliff. Below, he could hear the multitudinous noise of waters; and, as he watched the long line of waves sweeping and breaking with savage glee against the granite cliff, he thought to himself: "There is needed no assault of demon from the awful deep to make it possible for me to be plunged at any moment into that yawning fathomless abyss." But as he looked upwards to the city seated on the hill, and drank in the music of its vesper bells, he thought to himself: "Ah me! besides a mighty will and a steady brain, aid must come to me from above, if ever I am to be safely landed in that 'City of Peace.'" That supernatural aid did come; the struggling man seized it, and was drawn out of the very jaws of death, and safely landed in the Catholic Church. And, now, what has this voice from beyond the Atlantic to say about his experience of the years he has passed as a child of the Catholic Church? I will give you his own words: "I have been, during thirteen years of my Catholic life, constantly engaged in the study of the Church and her doctrine, and especially in relation to philosophy and natural reason. I have had occasion to examine and defend Catholicity precisely under those points of view which are most odious to my non-Catholic countryman, and to the Protestant mind generally; but I have never, in a single instance, found a single article, dogma, proposition, or definition of Faith which embarrassed me as a logician, and which I could, so far as my own reason was concerned, have changed, or modified, or in any respect altered from what I found it, even if I had been free to do so. I have never found my reason struggling against the teachings of the Church, or felt myself restrained, or found myself reduced to a state of mental slavery. I have, as a Catholic, felt and enjoyed a mental freedom which I never conceived possible while I was a non-Catholic." After such testimony, who will not say: "It is worth a man's while to storm Heaven and batter at its Gates for the gift of Divine Faith"?

To Protestants generally, dissatisfied with an institution concerning which a modern writer has said: "not only has experience proved the practical incoherency of its superstructure, but criticism has washed away like sand every vestige of its supernatural foundation," I earnestly recommend the careful perusal of these words of Cardinal Newman and Dr. Brownson. To others, still lower down the inclined plane, I would say: "If, from bitter experience, you have come to learn that something more and better than free schools, free museums, free lectures, free entertainments, free land, and free love, together with freedom of thought, and of speech, and of writing, and of doing, is needed to satisfy the mind's hunger for truth, and to slake the heart's thirst for happiness; and if, upon trial, you have found that the religion of Humanity and Science is powerless to restrain evil passion, and to assuage wearing sorrow, then, in mercy to yourselves, I ask you to try what the Christian religion can do for your restless souls. And as you cast about in search of the most consistent form of Christianity, I ask you to choose the principle laid down by that very intelligent statesman, Sir George Cornwall Lewis: 'As a rule, the professors of any science are trustworthy in proportion as the points of agreement among them are numerous and important, and the points of difference few and unimportant.'"

Apply this general principle to the science of religion. Take your mental balance and place in one scale of it the 71 millions of Protestants, along with their 200 odd different sects, and ascertain, if you can, in what points of doctrine they agree with one another, and in what points they mutually differ. Next take the other scale and place in it the 250 millions of Catholics alive at this very moment on earth. Find out in what points of doctrine *they* agree with one another, and in what points they, too, differ. Having thus fairly instituted a comparison between the Faith in the one scale, and the so-called Faith in the other, you will of necessity arrive at a conclusion. You will say: As we find by experience that the points of agreement among Protestants are few,

and the points of difference are numerous and important, whereas the points of agreement among Catholics are numerous and important, and the points of difference among them are few and unimportant, we have no alternative but to turn our backs now and for ever upon the so-called National Religion, and embrace once and for ever the grand old Tradition of the world-wide Church, the Catholic Faith.

We are all of us, by nature, and in the circumstances in which we find ourselves here below, like blind men in an unknown region. We are in urgent need of a guide in whose hand we may safely place our own, with confidence that we shall not be misled; a guide that will safely conduct us to a land where Faith shall pass into vision, and Hope be more than realized in the possession of God, in "the city of perfect beauty," in "the kingdom of perpetual peace."

When, out of the many guides who press their services upon us, we make choice of the Catholic Church, we are but choosing one who, while she claims to be the only guide that knows the way to the "Better Land," has made good that claim by the safe conduct of souls, "of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues," to its golden gates for more than eighteen hundred years.

"Be ye more staid, O Christians! Not like feathers, by each wind removable, nor think to cleanse yourselves in every water. Either Testament, the Old or New, is yours, and for your Guide the Shepherd of the Church. Let this suffice to save you."—(Dante, *Paradiso*, Canto v.)

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