

a system you would defend or refute, is to place obstacles and stumbling-blocks in the way of that objective. It is not conducive to true religion, or true philosophy, and is destructive of moral integrity in those who practise that immoral method. It is, therefore, the best morals, as well as the best policy, in refuting an erroneous principle or system. to first state it correctly, that it may be seen as it is.' All this, of course, implies, on the part of the critic or adversary, a sound and first-hand acquaintance with the system or doctrines or set of doctrines which he sets forth to refute. When, therefore, a prominent cleric stands forth in public and bombards the Catholic Church and her official teachings with volleys of the red-hot shot that is traditionally associated with the month of July, we are entitled to ask him: 'What do you know about the Catholic Church? Have you ever seriously tried—and for how long—to learn at first hand and from authoritative sources just what she believes and teaches? Would you feel justified in attacking any other society or organisation, any individual or body of men, any State or nation, without adequate knowledge, and with scarcely any fund of information but natural, inherited, or cultivated prejudice?'

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In every branch of human knowledge except two—from boot-making to mining, sculpture, fortification, and higher philosophy—knowledge is regarded as a condition previous to discussion. The two exceptions are the 'running' of a newspaper and Catholic theology. The knowledge of these things comes, as DOGBERRY said of writing, by nature. Every drover and ploughman can conduct a paper better than a paper has ever been conducted before. We all know that bachelors' wives and maiden's children are well trained. And every over-confident no-Popery enthusiast deems ignorance of Catholic theology about the best qualification for dealing with it, and, as soon as he has swallowed the contents of one or two of the cheaper and nastier kind of controversial tracts, is exalted with the mental rawness which is proud, and considers himself fit to teach the Pope and the whole College of Cardinals. This extraordinary delusion—or superstition, or whatever you may call it—is not confined to the more ignorant and bigoted section of the non-Catholic laity. It is found here and there, although in happily decreasing abundance, even among the clergy. Its melancholy prevalence accounts in great part for the frequency and virulence of attacks, in press and pulpit and upon the platform, against the Catholic Church and body. From long use, Catholics can shrewdly guess the literary—in some cases semi-illiterate—sources from which the rude and rusty weapons of such attacks are drawn—just as the lady says in *Hudibras* :—

Some have been beaten till they know  
What wood a cudgel's of by th' blow ;  
Some kicked, until they can feel whether  
A shoe be Spanish or neat's leather.

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In the present instance the uncalled-for attack was delivered by one who had never opened a work of Catholic theology, who was wholly unacquainted with the meaning of the most elementary terms of the science, who, in the course of the discussion, learned, to his evident amazement, and for the first time in his life, the impassable barrier that separates the shifting and variable opinions of this or that theologian from the unchanging and defined dogmas of our faith, who had never seen even one of the Catholic authorities about whom he dogmatised so freely, and who did not bring to the controversy even such a knowledge of the subject as may be acquired by a perusal of one of our penny catechisms. Add to these amazing evidences of his unfitness for discussion an altogether surprising looseness and 'riskiness'—not to say recklessness—of statement such as almost invariably characterise the violent and noisy slap-dash order of anti-Catholic controversy, and you have all the elements for first-class blundering on a large scale. This double-barrelled source of inaccuracy led to the Dunedin assailant of the Catholic body into his rash and inconsiderate statements of alleged 'Catholic doctrine,' every one of which, without a single exception, he had to subsequently withdraw. It also enticed his unwary feet into some fifty errors and blunders in matters of fact, some of them of an exceedingly puerile and ludicrous character. Twenty-five of these were specifically noted and sheeted home by us during the course of the discussion. 'Old

HOBBS' said in his *Leviathan*, that 'words are wise men's counters: they do but reckon by them; but they are the money of fools'. Logicians tell us that most disputes and misunderstandings arise out of the abuse or misuse of words. Even an elementary acquaintance with Catholic philosophy and theology would save from many a blunder those controversialists with a loose habit of mind who are given to attack. Journalism, according to MARK TWAIN, places a similar curb upon the mouth of the over-free and reckless speaker. In a recent discussion with Dr. SMITH, the American humorist says he does not blame his adversary for certain discrepancies between his statements and hard fact, and continues: 'I make the proper allowances. He has not been a journalist, as I have been—a trade wherein a person is brought to book by the rest of his brothers so often for divergencies, that by and by he gets to be almost morbidly afraid to indulge in them. It is so with me. I always have the disposition to tell what is not so; I was born with it; we all have it. But I try not to do it now, because I have found out that it is unsafe. But with the Doctor, of course, it is different.' The moral of it all is this: that the cultivation of the habit of accuracy of thought and expression would do more for concord among Christians than the Hague Conference did for the peace of Europe.

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Thus one important lesson learned from the recent controversy is this: that complete and proven and admitted ignorance of Catholic doctrine is, in effect, with certain minds, rather an incitement to, than a deterrent from, attack upon it. The other lesson learned is this: that the usual source of supply of ammunition for attacks of this kind is, not the authoritative standards of the Catholic Church, but hostile writers, some of them, indeed, men of ability and reputation, but in most cases ill-acquainted with their subject and in nearly every instance more or less biassed; others (as we have shown) mere controversial rag-and-bone men, devoid of honor, honesty, or any title to consideration or respect. (1) Our assailant advanced twelve 'quotations' as 'proof' that certain more or less wild statements are 'Catholic doctrine.' Five of the twelve were about the most disgraceful instances of misrepresentation of the plain meaning of an author (St. LIGUORI) that have ever come under our notice; two more of them were grossly misstated and travestied; two were so absurdly mistranslated that they were made to convey an absolutely different meaning from what their authors intended; one was undiscoverable at or near the reference give; and the remainder did not represent the minds of the writers on the subjects under discussion. (2) The 'quotations' were the merest scraps or snippets torn from their context; and (3) not one of the dozen stated—as they were all alleged to state—'Catholic doctrine.' These, be it noted, are the methods not of one controversialist only. He represents a class—a happily diminishing class, it is true, but still a class whose sole or chief weapon against the Catholic body is a collection of second-hand or tenth-hand 'extracts' from anti-Catholic sources, and who, when forced from one contention or charge, promptly takes refuge, with ready versatility and slipperiness, in another—like ARTEMUS WARD's editor of the *Bugle of Liberty* in the controversy with a rival paper about a plank road: 'The road may be, as our contemporary says, a humbug; but our aunt isn't bald-headed, and we haven't got a one-eyed sister. Wonder if the editor of the *Eagle of Freedom* sees it?' One of the most regrettable features of the recent controversy was the storm of abuse to which we personally and the Catholic body generally were subjected, and the free and frequent use of the offensive—and, in polite usage, obsolete—terms 'Papist,' 'Popish,' 'Romish,' and other fierce watchwords of a day that is, thank GOD, long gone by.

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To Catholics under attack we therefore advise: (1) Accept from assailants only absolutely correct and verified statements of 'Catholic doctrine.' (2) Insist strongly upon the sharp distinction between defined doctrine and the opinions, inferences, or conclusions of this or that theologian. (3) Suspect all alleged quotations or extracts or translations from Catholic theologians, etc. (4) Insist upon first-hand references. And (5) resolutely refuse to accept second-hand