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" THE SACRED DUTY OF DOUBTING. "

BY THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP E. A. KNOX, D.D.

THE John Hopkins Press has published this year a volume of the deepest interest to all students of the Tractarian Movement. It is entitled *Cardinal Newman and William Froude, F.R.S., a correspondence, by Gordon Huntington Harper*. The book has a far wider appeal than its title suggests. It is the record of a conflict between two correspondents of supreme literary ability and profound moral earnestness, of whom one held fast to the sacred duty of believing and the other to the sacred duty of doubting. The book is all the more interesting as it is in no sense a faked correspondence. Nor is it a controversy in the ordinary sense of the word. A controversy carries with it the idea of a dispute in public. The lists are set. The seats of spectators or hearers are crowded. Cut and thrust are delivered with an eye, not merely to the combatants' defeat or victory, but with a yet more earnest desire to influence the " gallery," to win applause, to gain adherents. But the correspondence before us is between two intimate friends, sincerely attached each to the other, each desirous of the other's spiritual welfare, each writing with full consciousness of responsibility to God and to Him only. From first to last there is not one trace of loss of temper, of cheap scorings by verbal tricks of rhetoric. The cost at which the contest is maintained is almost heart-rending. William Froude, never wavering in his affection for Newman, and tenderly attached to his own family, sees first his wife, then two sons and a daughter, won over to the Church of Rome by Newman's persuasion, and is acutely sensible of the gulf opening up between him and his dearest. Yet he never utters a word of reproach. He understands that, from Newman's point of view, the wounds which he suffers are wounds that Newman's duty compels him to inflict. It would have been so easy for Froude to follow his wife and children for peace' sake. Yet it was so impossible. For Froude, like Job of old, wraps himself in his own integrity. He dares not to betray the sacred trust committed to him of absolute fidelity to reason, the duty of not forcing himself to believe, or affecting to believe, what reason does not allow him to infer from the premises before him. There is probably no record of controversy that has moved on a higher plane, of a doubter more sincere, who paid more dearly for his doubts, whose sense of obligation to an unseen, unknown God was more humble, more loyal, more deeply moving, with perhaps the one exception of Job in his darkest hours.

William Froude was the youngest of three brothers, Richard Hurrell, James Anthony, and William, sons of the Archdeacon of Totnes in the opening years of the nineteenth century. The father was an old-fashioned High Churchman, who, but for his sons, would have hardly figured on the pages of history. Of the

three sons, Richard Hurrell (pupil of John Keble), had he lived longer, might, perhaps, have brought the Tractarian Movement to a more abrupt conclusion. He was daring in thought, recklessly outspoken in utterance, an avowed hater of the Reformers and of the Reformation, and strongly attracted by the Roman Catholic type of piety. It was he who asked the fatal question which has never yet been answered from the Tractarian point of view, " What right had the English Convocations to depart from the Catholic faith ? " Of him and his influence on Newman it is not necessary to say more at present. James Anthony passed from under Tractarian influence to avowed agnosticism. He shared Hurrell's reckless and bitter denunciation of opponents, and in this respect differed widely from William. William was, or rather became, a very distinguished scientist, a Fellow of the Royal Society, to whom their Gold Medal was awarded. His investigations were on the motion of ships in waves. They profoundly affected naval designing. From these investigations William drew the conclusion that the achievement of permanent and final certainty is impossible, and that it is a moral obligation not to profess a certainty which is in fact beyond our reach. All three brothers accepted Butler's axiom that probability is the guide of life, but drew from it very different conclusions. Hurrell Froude turned for certainty towards a Church which claimed to be infallible ; Anthony regarded all religious faith as self-delusion ; William would not acquiesce in any claim to certainty which shut the door in the face of revision and re-examination of conclusions, however firmly they seemed to be established. His correspondence with Newman has this special interest, that it forced Newman to examine the grounds of all certitude in his *Grammar of Assent*.

The correspondence in this volume falls between the years 1844 and 1879. It is, necessarily, incomplete, and some of it is to be found either in the *Apologia* or in W. Ward's *Life of Newman* ; but a large portion has been hitherto unpublished, and it is to this that we naturally turn with chief interest. It opens with a vivid picture of Newman in doubt and perplexity, attracted by Rome, but waiting for the decisive call, which will make his passing over an imperative duty. He is conscious that the Church of England was not justified in its breach with the Papacy. But he is not less sensitive of the corruptions of Rome. His attempt to heal the breach between the two Churches by Tract XC has been repudiated by the Bishops and by his University. There is no hope of what he most desired, the unification of the two Churches, and he has even begun to fix the date of his submission to Rome. While he was in that state, William Froude, an ex-pupil of Newman at Oriel, perceiving that the foundations of his own religious belief were unstable, wrote to Newman for guidance, and Newman replied in a series of letters to Mrs. Froude, who was, in fact, in advance of Newman on the Romeward journey. These letters are an anticipation of the *Apologia*, but written with a different purpose. The *Apologia* was written to vindicate Newman's truthfulness. These

letters were written to show the inevitableness of the change that was so imminent. The object of this Article is to approach them as a revelation of Newman's thirst for certitude, for an authority which could command his unwavering and indefectible assent. To a great extent these letters, where they differ from the *Apologia* (and they do differ in some cases), are historically more trustworthy. For they are contemporary documents, written to intimate friends, without any *arrière-pensée* of the effect that they might have on the public mind.

One point of the greatest importance emerges. The storm centre of the Tractarian Movement was, of course, that one Article of the Creed: “ I believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church.” How could the Church of England profess this belief, if, as the Tractarians contended, the Roman and Eastern Churches were also true Churches, superstitious and corrupt, no doubt, but true Churches for all that ?

“ The Anglicans,” writes Newman, “ consider it (the Church) a succession, propagated through different countries, independent in each country, and claiming the adherence of Christians in this or that country to itself as it exists in this or that country. Each bishop is isolated from every other and supreme in his own diocese, and, if he unites with others, it is only as the civil power or his own choice happens to unite him. He claims obedience without claiming to be a depository and transmitter of true doctrine, the succession being a point of order, not a condition and witness of the faith. And all other bishops or religious bodies acting in his diocese without his leave are schismatical. Now, if this be so, the question occurs, in what sense do Anglicans consider the Church one ? In what sense are Rome and England one ?

“ If Rome and England are one, what is meant by the common phrase ‘ the Church of our baptism.’ Baptism is one, and admits into the ‘ one body,’ not into any local society. A child baptised by a clergyman of Oxford is not admitted into that *Church* or *Diocese*, but into the Catholic body, which is diffused the world throughout, and which is the real ‘ Church of his baptism.’ It puzzled me to make out in what sense, on the hypothesis that Rome and England formed one Church, a man changed his Church who went from the English to the Roman branch, any more than he changed it if he communicated here with the Church of Oxford, there with the Church of London. He changed his *faith* indeed, but that is another matter ; but how could he change his Church, when there was no other Church to change to ? ”

It is obvious how serious this reasoning became to a mind that had learned under Tractarian influences to rest its faith, not on the authority of Scripture, but on the authority of the interpretation given to Scripture by the Church. If the Church is one, and if it is to the Church that we look as our Teacher, what becomes of our Faith when the Church speaks with two flatly antagonistic voices ? Where shall the soul find certitude if she depends on the Church to tell her what doctrines she is to deduce from Scripture ? Certainly Newman was in no position to help William Froude to restore the foundations of his belief—that is, from his own point of view—until he could put before him the authoritative voice of a Church which could expound a self-consistent Creed.

Here, may a digression from the Correspondence be forgiven,

while an effort is made to trace the development of Anglo-Catholic teaching on this highly important issue? For nearly half a century the Tractarians and their successors taught the doctrine concerning the Unity of the Church which Newman found so unconvincing. To-day many Anglo-Catholics have renounced this form of teaching, and frankly admit that though the Church ought to be one, it is not one, and go on to say that there is no Church gifted with power of infallible teaching. They are forced into this position by the fact that a section of them, now by far the largest, most learned and most influential, has accepted the findings of Higher Criticism, on the Old and New Testaments. Manifestly, Higher Criticism, while professing finality in its negations, cannot pretend to finality in its affirmations. Higher Criticism may be quite sure that Moses did *not* write the Pentateuch, but it cannot say positively how many authors or redactors gave us the sacred Torah. It may be quite sure that Mark did *not* write the last few verses of his Gospel, but it cannot be quite sure how many writers are to be detected in the pages of the Acts of the Apostles. In other words, according to the views of these Anglo-Catholics, the teaching of the Pre-Reformation Church concerning Scripture is not to be trusted, and it would seem, though we have not seen it admitted, that it is exceedingly doubtful whether Scripture can be regarded as an authority even for the authority or necessity of the Episcopate. The axe is laid to the very roots of the Tractarian Movement. The only *certitude* which Anglo-Catholicism professes to offer is that some beliefs and practices have for many centuries nurtured a type of piety which its adherents believe to be the highest type. But what if this claim for the excellence of Anglo-Catholic piety be not accepted? What, if, for instance, the Society of Friends claims that without Priesthood, without sacrifice, without Sacrament it has nurtured a more Christ-like spirit, given birth to a higher type of altruism? There is room of course for argument, but there is no room for finality, no prospect at all of certitude.

The object of this digression has been to show the perplexities which Tractarianism has encountered in its attempt to establish a position of certitude and a consequent claim of authority. Confronted with the divergences of Protestant teaching and attributing those divergences to the unbounded exercise of private judgment, Tractarianism set up against these disunited forces the unjust authority of the One Catholic and Apostolic Church. But presently, how, asked Hurrell Froude, how, asked Newman, can the *One* Church condemn Purgatory in London, and proclaim it as the teaching of Christ in Rome? The object of Tract XC was to show that Purgatory was not condemned in London. But the more successful Pusey and his followers were in assimilating their interpretation of the doctrine of the Church of England to that of Rome, the more inexcusable was the schism between the two Churches. So, under cover of Higher Criticism and reconciliation with the modern scientific mind, Anglo-Catholicism, the heir of Tractarianism, has abandoned authority, and therewith has abandoned certitude,

leaving Rome in possession of the claim for finality, which many consciences regard as an inalienable property of faith.

Thus, for instance, Newman writes: “From the age of fifteen dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion. I know no other religion, I cannot enter into the idea of any other religion; religion as a mere sentiment is to me a dream and mockery.”

Now dogma is belief accepted on the basis of infallible authority; belief that admits of no denial, and resents any kind of question or examination. There are minds, not a few, constituted like Newman's, and attracted by the worship and practices of the Pre-Reformation Church, minds to which Tractarianism by its confident dogmatic tone made a strong appeal. Anglo-Catholicism, having abandoned dogma, has no message for them.

To return to the Froude correspondence. Newman, having joined the Church of Rome, and rejoicing in the unwavering dogmatic certitude gained by so doing, set himself to bring his more intimate friends into the peace and happiness which he enjoyed. He was not a “scalp-hunter” like Manning, “gauging his usefulness by the number and prominence of his converts.” But his affection for his friends compelled him to desire their conversion passionately. Now the more positive Newman was in his faith, the more repulsive was his proselytism to William Froude. To him it seemed grossly unfair that Newman should take advantage of Mrs. Froude's romantic inclinations to manœuvre her into a conviction that her husband was a lost soul. Froude remonstrated, and received from Newman a promise: “Your dear wife has said she would not write to me again, and I assure you, my dearest William, I shall not write to her,—but you can't hinder me (nor wish to hinder me) praying, whatever prayers are worth.” Yet it was not a month after this, that Newman wrote to Mrs. Froude:

“Do not fancy you can put me in a painful position to dear William; I don't mind differing with him. I don't mind giving you advice in which he would not concur. But I wish to be sure I tell him, when I do it. He is so true and tender, but I leave you safely to him. But I never can disguise from him what I think and feel about you.”

This singularly ill-expressed letter (for Newman could write shockingly bad English) was followed by several others in which the dominant note is still “the certainty” that is enjoyed by Catholics. The following note, added by Newman to one of these letters is very characteristic. “My argument is that against the probability adverse to Catholicism arising from the *prima facie* incompleteness of its proof must be put the *prima facie* probability in its behalf arising from ‘the certainty’ of Catholics.” Froude sees the blow impending and tries to avert it, not by pressure on Mrs. Froude, whose Romeward leanings were more temperamental than rational, but by efforts to weaken Newman's faith in his religious certainty. A long letter which Froude had written to Newman, while he was in Rome after his conversion, failed to reach its destination. (Was it suppressed?) But other letters survive which show Froude endeavouring to persuade Newman that even

men of science cannot attain certitude, far less make dogmatic statements which shall convey to all who listen to them precisely the same meanings. If dogmatism, within so limited and purely rational a sphere, is unattainable, how much less can it be reached in realms confessedly supra-rational and supernatural?

The painful record of Newman's persistent pressure on Mrs. Froude is crowned at last on March 19, 1857, with the following letter:

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"I know you will be glad to hear that I was received into the Catholic Church this morning. It is strange that you are the only person whom I now venture to tell of the great blessing which God has given me—not even my dearest William. . . . My heart aches for *him*; for he is miserable at the idea of our virtual separation—and he has nothing to fall back on, whereas I could not be unhappy if I tried, even with all my sorrow for him. I must tell you how from my heart I thank you for what you have done to help me—other Catholics always seemed to be 'making a case' when they said things to me—you always contrived to say exactly what soothed my mind."

What was it then that Newman had said? So far as the letters in this correspondence show, he had never argued with her after he joined the Church of Rome as to the demerits of the Anglican or merits of the Roman Church. He had treated her speculative doubts as unimportant compared with the duty of obeying her conscience, which commanded her to join the Church of Rome. He had promised her "absolute certainty of faith in the truth of what the Church conveyed to her from God." He had bidden her "throw herself on the Power, Love and Faithfulness of Him Who called her." He had told her that it "was his distinct judgment that she was bound to join the Church at once." Taking advantage, it would appear, of the scrupulosity of her husband, he had promised her absolute release from all doubts and scruples, absolute peace and happiness. Would Mrs. Froude have acted otherwise if William had had, for instance, the assurance of a Methodist, or the spiritual peace of a William Wilberforce? Such questions cannot be answered. But it is evident that Newman took advantage of William Froude's conscientious refusal to pretend to a certainty which he (Froude) had not attained. His position was that of Thomas during the eight days after the Resurrection. Yet his extraordinary patience with Newman, and his humility, the very antipodes of some forms of scientific assuredness, make a strong appeal to us, an appeal also, may we not believe, to his Master?

Some light on the nature of William Froude's difficulties is shown by his sending to Newman a copy of Fitz-James Stephen's criticism of the *Apologia* in *Fraser's Magazine* for September, 1864. In doing so Froude said that, while he deprecated the roughness of tone, he found that "the substance of the views which the writer expresses is more nearly that which he has always felt a wish to express, than anything which he has elsewhere fallen in with." This Article may therefore be confidently accepted as reflecting the nature of William Froude's doubts. Reference to it shows that, as

we should have expected, Fitz-James Stephen does not champion the agnosticism of Huxley, for instance, or of Herbert Spencer. On the contrary, he professes throughout faith in Christianity, and, though his attitude to Scripture is not that of an Evangelical, yet it is reverent, and very different from the tone current in the agnostic circles of his time. His object is not to instil doubt, but to show the overwhelming obstacles to faith produced by Newman's passion for certitude. It is strictly relevant to perusal of the correspondence before us to examine the general line followed in this Article, for it gives us a much clearer idea of William Froude's position than we should gain from perusal of the correspondence without it.

The Article in *Fraser's Magazine* makes it plain that the faith demanded by Newman was faith in the Roman Catholic Church. "Cease to believe in Catholicism, and you become Protestant, Unitarian, Deist, Pantheist, Sceptic, in a dreadful but infallible succession." Newman, in fact, tried to rush the religiously minded into Roman Catholicism by presenting Atheism as the only alternative. Faith for him meant faith in the infallible Church, which

"claimed to have a sure guidance into the very meaning of every portion of the Divine message in detail, which was committed by our Lord to the Apostles. The Church claims to know its own limits and to decide what it can determine absolutely and what not. It claims, moreover, to have a hold upon statements not directly religious so far as this is to determine directly whether they relate to religion, and, according to its own definitive judgment to pronounce whether or not, in a particular sense they are consistent with revealed truth. It claims to decide magisterially, whether infallibly or not, that such and such statements are or are not prejudicial to the apostolic *depositum* of faith in their spirit or in their consequences, and to allow them or to condemn and forbid them accordingly. It claims to impose silence at will on any matter or controversies of doctrine which on its own *ipse dixit* it pronounces to be dangerous or inexpedient or inopportune. It claims that whatever the judgments of Catholics upon such acts, these acts should be received by them—with . . . outward marks of reverence, submission, and loyalty."

After this, Newman found no difficulty in insisting on belief in such doctrine as transubstantiation. A man who has once taken the great step of believing in God at the bidding of the Church is unreasonable if his faith fails him over mysteries of far less seriousness or importance. "Why should not transubstantiation be true? What is to hinder it? What do I know of substance or matter?" His sermons abounded in glorification of the doctrine of transubstantiation, clinging to this belief, in spite of its being based on subtle conceptions of scholastic philosophy which have no meaning to either science or philosophy to-day. To William Froude, whose life work consisted of delicate and profoundly careful investigation into properties of material objects, who treated them with reverence as in a sense Divine revelations, it could not fail to be a surrender of reason and a treachery to God to assume that the Church could, on its own authority and in defiance of the witness of the senses, make pronouncements which would be valid only if our senses were given us to deceive us.

There is abundant proof in this Article, which William Froude so heartily accepted as consonant with his own opinions, that the sacred duty of doubting on which he insisted was fully justified by the demands which Newman made on his faith. Still, it would seem from the letters that passed between them that Froude abstained from criticising the more outrageous demands of Roman Catholicism. His home would have been no home to him, if he had not kept silence and borne patiently with some of the extravagances of Roman claims. Surely his patience must also have been strained, when his son Hurrell, being unable, as a Roman Catholic, to enter any Oxford College, and having to take refuge in the household of Professor Donkin, got over the still further obstacle of attending Protestant family prayers, by attending them " carrying a crucifix," and " with full mental reservation." With great dignity and nobility of soul Froude moved in his arguments on the higher plane of the possibility of certitude in reaching conclusions, and in the duty of " religiously keeping before our eyes the fallibility of processes of thought," and " instead of saying this is my honest belief and so help me God it ever shall be, the duty of saying, this is for the present the best conclusion I can come to, but in the sight of God I declare that I shall be at all times ready to reconsider it, if reasonably called on to do so."

By resolutely adhering to this course Froude drove Newman to write his *Grammar of Assent*, in which an attempt is made on scientific principles to show how the human mind reaches conclusions and gives its assent to them. The result of the inquiry was that Newman came to the conclusion that certainty is not to be reached by reason, and that in matters which are beyond the grasp of reason, we have to use the " illative " sense, a " thinking with our whole being," which bridges the gap that separates reason from things and beings beyond the reach of reason. The result was to reduce " certitude " to a mental state.

" Those propositions," wrote Newman, " I call certain which are such that I am certain of them. Reason never bids us be certain except on absolute proof, and such proof can never be furnished to us by any logic of words; for as certitude is of the mind, so is the act of inference which leads to it. Everyone who reasons is his own centre. . . . The sole and final judgment on the validity of an inference in concrete matters is committed to the personal action of the ratiocinative faculty, the perfection of which I have called the ' illative sense,' parallel to our use of it in ' good sense,' ' common sense,' ' a sense of beauty,' etc."

Of course it follows that a man may be without the ' illative sense,' as he may be without a sense of beauty, and then he will, like William Froude, be justified in insisting on ' the sacred duty of doubting,' but he will perish everlastingly.

It was a singular conclusion to reach, if we look back to the starting-point of the early Tractarian days. Then all was plain and straightforward. There was a Church that taught us what we were to believe, a Church of England, which gradually gave place, in the case of Newman and others, to the more confidently

self-asserting Church of Rome. But, as questionings arose, and the demands on faith became more and more exacting, the result of self-analysis was to show that we believe what we choose to believe, and in a world of probability we reach certainty not by reason but by a resolute act of the will. What then is the difference between this decision and the accursed private judgment of the Protestants, except that the Romanist calls in un-reason to assist him after he has made his final decision?

To end with such an *argumentum ad hominum* would be an unsatisfactory conclusion, even if it were all that this correspondence legitimately required of us. We cannot help asking ourselves which of the two writers came nearer to the truth—he who insisted on the sacred duty of believing, or he who pleaded for the sacred duty of doubting? Nor shall we be satisfied by affirming that Froude was by conscience, as well as by reason, compelled to refuse assent to what Newman required him to believe. A large issue has been raised, and, even if it is one that cannot be settled in a few lines at the end of a long article, we can hardly leave it without at least some plain statement of our own experience, or preferably, of that which we have gathered from Scripture, and verified in our own lives.

There is a certitude which is obtainable by man. S. Paul calls it (1 Cor. ii. 4) “the certitude of the Holy Ghost.” The late Bishop Robertson’s comment on these words is that “certitude” means “stringent proof.” “Aristotle distinguishes it,” he adds, “from the Syllogism. The latter proves that a certain conclusion follows from premises which may or may not be true. In ‘certitude’ the premises are known to be true.” “S. Paul is not dealing with scientific certainty; but he claims that the certitude of religious truth to the believer is as complete and as objective—equal in degree though different in kind—as the certitude of scientific truth to the scientific mind. Mere human wisdom may dazzle and overwhelm and seem to be unanswerable—but it does not penetrate to those depths of the soul which are the decisions of a lifetime. It is distinguished from the wisdom of men in this, that a clever argument is at the mercy of a cleverer argument; but Faith, which is at its root personal trust, springs from the vital connection of human personality with Divine.” The sacred duty of believing is the surrender of the soul to the keeping of a Divine Personality. It cannot be shaken, because it knows “on Whom it has believed.” On the other hand, one feature that distinguishes it from mere self-assurance, from mere emotionalism, from the confidence of insanity or semi-insanity is this, that the living Lord in Whom we have believed has given us two gifts, we may call them two *talents*, of which He will require an account. If we use them not, we are dishonest stewards. These gifts, or talents, are “reason” and “the Word of God addressed to us in Holy Scripture.” By use of these two tests we distinguish “the certitude of the Holy Ghost” from the certitude promised to us by false spirits. Any spirit which promises us certitude in plain defiance of reason, or on condition

of neglecting, corrupting, or defying the plain Word of God, is a false spirit. To such a spirit we oppose the sacred duty of doubting. We challenge it with the sword of the Spirit. We answer it by the sacred duty laid on us of "loving the Lord our God with all our *mind*." We are saved from bare individualism by the fact that the Holy Ghost, Who gave us the Word, guides the mind of the whole Fellowship created by His indwelling. He, Who creates the most profound, most absolute of all certitudes within us by revealing to us the Christ, relieves us from all fear that we are victims of self-imposture by bringing us into harmony with the Spirit-guided Church of God. Hence we have a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, a confidence that hath a great reward. The personal certitude or faith, which is ours by revelation through the Spirit of "the love which God hath towards us," being found also in the Spirit-guided Fellowship of the Saints, is at once a living union with God, and an experience shared with others. It is a spiritual experience, which is capable of intellectual expression and communication. The personal faith of the believer is expressed in the faith once for all delivered to the Saints.

Certitude is not submission to an external authority, human in fact, whatever higher claim it may advance on its behalf. Certitude is not secured by stifling reason, nor by allowing others to interpret for us the revelation which God has put into our hands. But it is the meeting of the soul with God, a fact more certain than any in the world of sense that lies around us. God is more certain to us than the world that passeth away. But the vision is confirmed by His Word conveyed to us through reason not fettered but free, reason that is the Spirit-enlightened Spirit-guided gift of Him Who is Truth as well as Love.

Dr. J. R. Mott contributes a Foreword to Mr. Alexander McLeish's "*Jesus Christ and World Evangelization, Missionary Principles: Christ's or Ours*," (Lutterworth Press, 2s. net), in which he recommends this study as a challenge to the present generation to use the marvellous opportunity for great adventure. A work more like that which on earth occupied Christ Himself than any other service known among men. The author takes his principles from the New Testament, and applies them with great force and directness to the Evangelism of the Church in the present day.

THE ADVENTURES OF ELIZABETH GRAY. By Isabel Cameron. *Religious Tract Society.* 3s. 6d.

This is a bright and entertaining record of the various adventures of a lively, happy-spirited woman, who is ready to help any lame dogs whom her love and sympathy can reach. Humour and pathos mark all these little life-sketches of the friends of Elizabeth Gray, and in the end her own story reaches a happy conclusion.