

All the great bulwarks of Constitutional liberty existed then. Were not the independence of the judiciary and trial by jury of Catholic origin? It was only after the Reformation that successful attempts were made to tamper with the liberty of the subject. It was only in the time of Queen Elizabeth that members of Parliament were arraigned to answer for the speeches they made there. In the days of Edward the Third, the judges felt themselves aggrieved for being asked their opinion of a case before they took cognizance of it in their judicial capacity.

The principle of municipal government, as distinguished from the centralisation now established in Continental Europe, that municipal government which, next to representation, is one of the most important features of our institutions, which makes a government powerful and a people happy, was also of ancient and Catholic origin? So much was this the case, and so confidently did the people lean upon the Church, that the charters of their liberties were preserved in the cathedrals, and twice every year in those ages, when newspapers were unknown, and books rare, their contents were read to the assembled multitude, that all might know the law, and knowing, observe it. It is remarkable that we find it laid down in the books of these days, that confessors should be acquainted with the charters, in as much as it was their duty to enquire from their penitents, whether they had carefully complied with their provisions.

You may look abroad, and I would ask what important principle of liberty do we now possess which does not date back to Catholic times?

But how did Catholic England obtain these institutions? It is a remarkable fact, that so long ago as the days of St. Gregory—the Pope who sent Augustine to preach the faith in England—he pointed out to his pupil, for such in fact Augustine was—the superiority of English institutions over those of other nations, from the fact that those other nations had been comparatively civilized when Christianity was introduced, and their institutions were merely modified to suit it. But England was barbarous before her conversion, and her institutions were founded wholly upon the spirit of Christianity, promulgated upon her shores. Hence I am even justified in saying, that if a difference existed between the civil institutions of continental nations and those of England, Catholicity is justly entitled to claim the whole credit.

When we compare modern with ancient civilization, many points of difference will present themselves—but we will see on examination that the superiority of the former is entirely due to Christianity. It was in consequence of Christian principles implanted deeply in the minds of men, which entrined themselves around their institutions, that the barbarians who invaded Europe were civilized and elevated. This great object was effected in the first place by the superiority of Christian doctrine regarding the nature of man, and his dignity as such.

In ancient systems of government man was merely considered as a member of the community, and his value estimated in proportion to his ability to aid in maintaining or acquiring power. If he was not considered useful in this respect he was despised. Hence, the Spartans put to death all children whose physical organization was defective, since they could never be useful members of society, as then constituted; and, hence, we find that in the present age, in China, children who are cripples, or whose services are not required, are exposed by their parents to die by the road side with the same indifference they would display in casting away a superfluous brood of cats or dogs.

But, in the eye of Christianity, man assumed a more glorious aspect. He is a creature redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, destined to enjoy the blessings of Heaven, and thus raised higher than he could be by any political organization.

The Christian doctrine is a levelling one—not levelling in the radical sense of the term, by taking away from one man a portion of what he possessed and giving it to another; but by showing to all men the relative insignificance of temporal things, and by teaching that though one man might be temporarily above another, in the eyes of God all are equal. All have the same rights as members of the great family of Jesus Christ, baptized with the same water, fed at the same holy table, and all advancing to the same glorious end.

Though one might wear a crown and another labor to obtain his daily bread by the sweat of his brow, these are but empty distinctions, when the end of each was the same. Nay, poverty and a lowly condition become preferable, since the Saviour, whom they adored, had selected that position in society as his own.

But Christianity did not merely elevate man, she directed him, by announcing to him with power the law of God. She told rulers that their power was a trust from God, of which they should give a strict account, just as every other man must give an account of every gift entrusted to him. She told all that they must make the law of God the rule of their actions and must so deport themselves as to prepare to appear before an all-seeing judge, from whose eyes nothing, not our very thoughts, can be hid. She held up God every where at the same time a Lord and Master, a Father and Judge.

Having proclaimed with power the responsibility of all, the Catholic Church announces to them their duties, not merely in a general way, but as applied to each one in his particular situation, and thus strives, and, to a great extent, always succeeds in making the law of God the controlling power in society.

The great source of Catholic influence, however, arises from the fact that she acts on men by her institutions. Abstract teaching may be useful but the sphere of its action is necessarily limited and ephemeral. It is by embodying her teaching and her spirit in living institutions that the Catholic Church has brought home to all, and driven deeply into public feeling those principles which she inculcated.

It was thus she taught the nature of God and the sublime mysteries that show forth the treasures of His love. The mysteries of Christianity are set forth in the beautiful variety of her ceremonies and her ever recurring festivals. Christian dignity and the equality which religion teaches are now nowhere taught more forcible than when she invites us to come and partake together of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, under the mystical veils of the Eucharist.

When the Monarch and the peasant knelt at the same altar—when the serf and his master partook of the same communion, what must have been their mutual feelings? Instead of seeing a slave, the master beheld a brother—an heir to the same promises of eternal bliss! Thus, the chains which had bound the slave fell from him, as the mist is dissipated by the rising sun.

The authority of the law of God and the responsibility arising under it, are nowhere set forth so powerfully as in the Sacrament of penance, to which all are required to approach to obtain pardon for sin.

That Sacrament, so much derided by our opponents, made each one examine himself before God whether he had acted in conformity with the law, and if he violated its provisions seek pardon, by endeavoring to comply with the conditions required by the Almighty. It was thus well calculated to impress on all, and to keep alive a deep sense of duty. It was humiliating to be sure, but the humiliation arose only from a consciousness of guilt, which was the result of repentance.

It showed in God a Father ready to receive his erring children, but only after sincere repentance, and a firm determination to sin no more. One uninfluenced by his passions and acting under the responsibility of a minister of God, was called upon to pronounce on the sinner's sincerity, to correct any error which self-love might have created, and to pronounce the sentence of absolution only when the requirements of God's law had been truly satisfied.

Public opinion, to which men, now, so confidently appeal, and on which they lay so much stress, though frequently a fruitful source of crime, was thus powerfully influenced, and as far as this influence extended made a bulwark of morality.

It was by these things that the nations of Europe were brought back to civilization. Restraining power within proper limits, and giving it a sacred character when acting within its proper sphere: making the dignity of man felt, and showing this to be derived from divine grace; speaking to him fearlessly and bringing home to him a knowledge of his duty, the type of Christian civilization was formed and impressed on the nations. Scorning to do wrong, or omit what was right; willing to obey what was lawful but always despising what had no claim but brute force; independence without pride, obedience without fawning, and respect for the rights of others became the principles which men aimed at adopting, and when they did not adopt them they paid them the homage of at least wishing to appear to adopt them.

When nations are once civilized it is comparatively easy to transport their institutions elsewhere. It is easy for a man to go forth into the wilderness, and taking with him a knowledge of those institutions in the enjoyment of which he has spent his boyhood, to found new States. But this was not the task which Catholicity undertook, and accomplished. Civilization had been swept away by the savage hordes that had invaded Europe. They found their broad swords stronger than the empires which they overthrew.—Their position was well calculated to make them despise the learning, the habits, and the institutions, as well as the power of the vanquished.

It was under these circumstances that Catholicity came, bearing with it the cross, civilization, new institutions and that fixedness of purpose, gentleness, and virtue, which characterise the Christian religion. Notwithstanding many instances of barbarism existing at the same time, which have been and will be found in every age, those who beheld what that religion has effected for the cause of civilization and freedom, before any other existed, must admire what has been done, and give her the glory of the great work accomplished.

Some maintain that the British constitution, which served for the foundation of ours, was a complicated combination of artificial checks and balances—was, in fact, a system of the most refined ingenuity.

For my part, I regard it as a model of simplicity, and to this very fact I consider its stability attributable. For after all, its essence is but that spirit of justice which recognizes the rights and duties of the King and the Commons alike, which prevents one from taking what belong to the other, and insures to all the possession of their proper share. As the whole nation could not assemble to consult as to what was their interest, or what they would contribute to the common weal, the various communities found it necessary to depute individuals to attend a general assembly for the purpose. Without this they could have had no real share in controlling the result. It was from this representative system had its origin.

Under the system by which Rome was governed one city was supreme, and though the limits of the empire were every day extended until they embraced the whole civilized world known at that day, the inhabitants acquired rights only by being made citizens of Rome. Nominally, and by a fiction of law they became citizens, yet those only who dwelt within the walls of the city really possessed power.—Justice was thus violated and as a consequence what had been built was overturned; where just ideas prevail, fictions can never satisfy the reason of mankind, and hence it was necessary to introduce the system of representation.

This important feature of modern liberty is thus wholly due to a deep sense of justice abiding in the nation, to a sentiment which nothing can create or preserve so fully as a religion that can act on society with power.

Some may demand of me, why if, as I asserted, the

institutions of this country were nearly identical with those of Catholic England, have we not the barons, the nobles, and kings of whom we read so much in Catholic days?—you have them not, merely because they did not cross the ocean.

As a distinguished writer of the present day has said, with great propriety, "kings or nobles did not emigrate, but the commons merely," and hence we have the institutions peculiar to the British commons. When the abuses of royalty made its representatives be sent home, and the men of the revolution were called on to create another power to bind the Colonies into one body, it was but natural that one should be created homogeneous with those with which they are familiar, and the Union as well as the States became thus consolidated under the forms of a democratic republic.—But these institutions so far from differing from those congenial to the spirit of Catholicity, harmonise with it in the fullest manner.

Some suppose that the people of former days were entirely unacquainted with the great principles of liberty which are now our boast. Yet St. Thomas of Aquin whose writings are used in Catholic seminaries, and have properly exercised more influence upon the minds of the pupils than those of any other man.—St. Thomas, a monk of the middle ages, discussed the merits of each system of government, and, conceding to each the merit to which it was entitled, came to the conclusion that a Republican was the most perfect.

Even where kingly governments prevail, the general doctrine of Catholic theologians is, that the monarch derives his power from the people, and would forfeit it, when grossly abused. This was the doctrine of St. Thomas, the "angel of the schools." It was taught and defended by Bellarmine. Suarez teaches it as the "general doctrine of theologians," and ably defends it against James I. of England. James asserted that the power of the monarch came immediately from God, while Suarez showed that it came from, and was held for, the benefit of the people, and was forfeited when it was abused to a degree to make its longer tenure operate against their interests. He scouted the idea that kings could not be deposed, and I have already shown how in Catholic England that doctrine had not only been taught but enforced.

Let us look at the institutions which have grown up in the church, between which and many of those existing in the civil government there will be observed a striking resemblance. The great republican principles, that all should be guided by law, that merit alone should be the road to preferment, that power is only a trust for the benefit of the governed, are nowhere inculcated more, nor more effectually enforced than in the government of the Catholic Church. Nay, I have no hesitation in saying that many of our wisest laws are derived from those of the Church. According to Catholic principles it is true, the authority of her pastors does not come from the people, yet every religious order is a republic, which elects its own officers, even its Superior. Dioceses are governed by Bishops, but the laws directing their government are well defined. The laws of the Church are zealously directed against every mode of acquiring office or honor, except that of merit.—Natural succession is necessarily excluded, and arbitrary preferment made almost impossible.

I do not hesitate to say that the rules of the councils and of the other deliberative assemblies in the Church, contain many valuable hints for the direction of all such bodies. Yet her government by these is the normal state of things, which she adopts all over Christendom, wherever she is free. Am I not justified then in saying that a sympathy for this government, founded on analogous principles and usages must exist in every Catholic heart?

Every one will admit the importance of religion for the government of society, since all know if it were withdrawn, the mainspring of the vast machine would be broken. Constitutions would be but as chaff before the wind. Laws will be swept away wherever a sense of duty and the force of moral obligation are not embedded deeply in the bosom of society. This truth will explain the origin of those convulsions, which we have lately witnessed. Men have succeeded in plucking from the hearts of the multitude a love of religion—in many cases even a religious belief was banished. But man is not a mere machine. Unless his actions are governed by the laws of God, his institutions will be like buildings erected on the sand, which will be swept away by the torrent. We have seen this effected, within the last few months in France, by the hand of one man, and such will be the fate of all governments in the hearts of whose people religion is not firmly implanted.

The religious training necessary for this is imparted with peculiar efficacy by the Catholic Church. She does not merely announce her doctrines and her precepts. She embodies them, as I have already stated, in institutions which bring them home to all ages, all classes; makes them sink deeply into our very nature and thus at trying moments, as well as in the days of prosperity, they exercise a powerful influence on the mind and on the heart.

Acting under the great principles to which I have alluded, the Catholic Church has placed modern society in its present position, which nothing, except a convulsion, such as overthrew the Roman empire, can destroy. I will not undertake to say, that, in those times, many and flagrant abuses have not been committed by persons connected with the Church. To claim an exemption from these, would be to claim more than Jesus Christ himself has promised, for He did not say that scandal would cease. It will always exist. Crimes will always be. But the glory of Catholicity remains undimmed. It goes steadily on, and speaks not in the language of passion; but it is a light shining in the darkness to show man his way, even when he is not willing to follow it.

Let me not be understood as saying that nothing good can be accomplished except by Catholicity.

My religion does not teach me that good acts may not be performed by those who do not belong to her fold. It taught me the very reverse. If the Catholic religion worked on a people, it worked by its institutions, and as all religions preserved some of these, I would do injustice to myself as well as to others, if I said they had no good remaining. But I hope they will pardon me if I boldly allude to what I consider the inherent defects of the systems opposed to Catholicity.

The first is that they produce no good by those features in which they differ from ours. Whatever good they accomplished was accomplished by the principles and institutions which we hold in common.

Private judgment is said to be an ennobling doctrine. For my part, I can see no such quality in it. The point of difference on this subject between Catholics and their opponents amounts merely to this: When doubts arise regarding the meaning of Scripture, or on points to which the teachings of Scripture do not extend. The question is put, "is there any mode by which the doubt can be solved—is there any authority established by God by which the controversy may be decided? Catholics say there is; Protestants deny it.—Where the real teaching of Scripture is ascertained there is no dispute regarding the obligation of adopting it. That doubts existed regarding its meaning is manifest. Of the opinions put forward on any point only one can be true. And Protestantism tells us there is no solution of the difficulty, that each one must adhere to his own view of the subject, true or false. No other light has been provided by God. And this is private judgment.

What is there in this destination—in this absence of light, that can be considered ennobling? When the man who is seeking his way to a distant home, comes to a cross-road, is it ennobling to tell him that there are no finger boards—that there is no guide—that he must choose for himself—be independent—follow, in a word, his private judgment? Yet this, after all, is the proud position claimed for man by Protestantism; the position which we are told is the source of the greatness of Protestant nations.

If Protestants have done their share—as no doubt they have—in preserving the institutions of the country, it was by means of the Catholic doctrines which they have preserved, for most of their positive doctrines are Catholic, and the greater part of those which were not are now repudiated, and if retained would but contribute to the degradation of man.

The denial of free will was formerly a doctrine that Protestantism made its own, and which Luther inculcated, teaching us to consider man as a horse which must go as its rider wills, guided by God or the devil as the case may be. I need not tell you that for a time the doctrine of free will was denied by Protestants, and of all the actually beneficial doctrines which they profess, I do not know of a single one which was not taught, in all its fullness, in the Catholic Church, long before Protestantism had an existence.

The next thing I would say in this connection is that Protestantism is a weak reed on which to lean; for so far from preserving society, it could not even preserve itself. Let us examine its position throughout the world. I will not say merely that infidelity and indifference have deprived it of many members. Many soldiers fall even in the armies of God, and many passed over to the enemy even from the household of the faith. But look at the churches themselves. The churches inally descended from those of the Reformers. See where they have gone in carrying out the work begun by their founders.

Look in the first place to continental Europe. You will find few, very few Protestants remaining there, who retain any vestige of what in this latitude would be deemed essential to Christianity.

I do not allude to this with any feelings but those of regret. Much as I condemn Protestantism in any shape, I must necessarily look with extreme regret on those of its forms which deny the divine character of the Redeemer of the world. People may call these Unitarian and claim them to be considered as Christian sects. For my part, I cannot consider them as deserving the name of Christianity.

Even the Mahomedans considered Christ as a great teacher, nay as a prophet second only to Mahomed. They give him a higher place than many of our modern sectaries, who wish to be called Christians.

I met not long ago a book of travels in the United States written by a Frenchman. He says that every man in this country must go to some church, must profess some religion—those, he says, who care about none call themselves Unitarians. This may be true, but in a certain sense it expresses a truth.

Feelings of indignation might be excited if I spoke entirely from myself regarding the condition of the Protestant Churches. I therefore, prefer quoting from an authority which I think will have weight with my audience, without being liable to the suspicion of wishing to triumph over what he relates.

I hold in my hand a book written by an Episcopalian clergyman of respectable standing in this country, who had formerly been a Presbyterian divine. It is but fair to say that the book is written to give his reasons for passing from one church to the other. But whatever we may think of his inferences, I cannot believe there can be any serious mistake as to facts in a book put forward under such circumstances. The book is a compilation of articles written for and published in the New York Churchman two or three years ago. It is entitled "A Presbyterian Clergyman looking for the church."

This gentleman tells us that in 1838 when he was in Geneva, though he was then a Presbyterian he had found it difficult to reconcile it to his conscience to approach the communion table in the Church in which Calvin had formerly preached. The author alluded to a Presbyterian clergyman, who had been in his company on that occasion, who thought to use his own expression, "that the church in Geneva had exceeded the limits within which a church continues to be a church of Christ," and "with a conscience I doubt not, as clear as my own in the opposite direction he would not, and did not commune."

The author did not mention this clergyman's name, but he evidently alludes to Dr. Potts, of New York.

I had in my possession, not long ago, a work which was used as a theological text book in the University of, I believe, Jena. The author's name was Wegscheider, and an idea of his system and principles may be gathered from the following statement:

He would take up a certain dogma, that of the Trinity for instance, and devote several articles to its consideration. In one he will explain the doctrine of the Old Testament, on the subject. In another, that of the writers in the New. In this article what we