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## LECTURE OF ARCHBISHOP HUGHES ON THE LIFE AND TIMES OF DANIEL O'CONNELL.

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The "Life and Times of Daniel O'Connell" furnish a theme for the grouping, into one subject, of the most remarkable and important public events which history has recorded as occurring at any time between the birth and the death of a public man. I regret that the task of presenting those events in a condensed yet luminous form, has not devolved on one more competent than I am to fulfill it in a manner satisfactory to so numerous and so enlightened an audience as the one I have the honor to address. If we begin by speaking of the times of O'Connell how wonderful are the public events which occurred under his eye, and within the range of his personal knowledge! For example, at his birth, the Catholic population of Ireland were under the inflictions of the Penal Code, which had continued for nearly ninety years, and had exercised its baneful and degrading influence on three successive generations. It combined—in its malignant foldings over every portion, so to speak, of the mind and body of the Catholics of Ireland—the strong coil of the anaconda, with the subtle sting of the scorpion. It denied them rights of property, rights of domestic order, rights of education, rights of religion—in short, it denied them every right except that which could not be called a right, but a necessity: namely, it aimed at making them paupers, as regarded property; barbarians, in reference to science and general education; and either apostates from the Catholic faith, or adherents thereto, under the disadvantages both of pauperism and of ignorance.

Details of specific statutes on this subject would be out of place in a lecture necessarily so brief as this must be. But, I may express the whole result in the words of Edmund Burke, who was a Protestant, although he never ceased to be a lover of his Irish countrymen. He says—"It had" (that is the Penal Code) "a vicious perfection. It was a complete system—full of coherence and consistency;—well digested and well disposed in all its parts. It was a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people, and the debasement, in them, of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man."

Under the operation of such a system, which had been in force for more than eighty years, Daniel O'Connell was born in 1775. The sword of the American colonies was unsheathed in resistance against the oppressions of Great Britain, in that same year. O'Connell on all public occasions ascribed the mitigation of the Penal Code in Ireland to the successful resistance of the American patriots. In 1777 a British army in its pride of place, surrendered at Saratoga to the once despised, insulted, and calumniated provincials. The penal code was relaxed in 1778. This relaxation was not the striking off of Ireland's fetters, but simply a lengthening, by a link or two, of the chain, which, in its stringent rivetings, had crushed her energies. It gave the Catholics power and dominion over the remnants of their property, of which they had not been legally plundered, during the three previous generations. But still they could not acquire even by this relaxation, the right to purchase, or as tenants, hold, any freehold interest.

In 1782 England was involved in war with other enemies, whose fleets rode triumphant and unopposed in the British Channel. She required 20,000 seamen and active landmen for her military service; and in order to obtain them from Ireland she relaxed the rigor of the Penal Code for a second time. By this relaxation she permitted the Catholics of Ireland to open schools for the education of their youth in literature and religion—after having made it a crime by her penal laws, during the previous eighty years, for any Catholic to teach, or to be taught, in Ireland or elsewhere. If want of education be a reproach to the Irish in later times, this historical fact will be sufficient to assign the reason. It reverses into a sad and literal sense, so far as the Irish are concerned, the hollow compliment of Lord Brougham to the enlightening genius of the British people, when, proclaiming the progress of education, he announced that the "schoolmaster was abroad;"—the schoolmaster had been literally "abroad" from Ireland during ninety years. His attempt to keep school or teach any person in Ireland, Protestant or Catholic, any species of literature or science, was punishable by law with banishment; and if he returned after banishment, he was subject to be hanged as a felon.—Under these circumstances, it was certainly the schoolmaster's interest to be "abroad." But if any Catholic child, however young, was sent to any foreign country for education, such infant child incurred a

corresponding penalty—that is, a forfeiture of all right to property, present or prospective.

In 1792 the French armies defeated their enemies at every point. The Netherlands were conquered, the cannon of the battle of Gemappe, were heard at Saint James's and the wisdom of English statesmen induced them, by way of conciliating the Irish, to relax the chain of the Penal Code by an addition of two or three other links of diminished bondage.—By this relaxation of the barbarous code, Catholics, for the first time in a century, might become barristers, attorneys and solicitors; they could be freemen of the lay corporations—the grand jury box and magistracy were open to them, and they were permitted to attain a rank as high as that of Colonel in the army—nay, some of them were allowed the elective franchise in voting for members of parliament.

Up to this time, concessions to the great body of the Irish people were made under the direct apprehension of danger to the British Empire, from the States with which she was at war. O'Connell was not yet of age, but already partial freedom, from one cause and another, began to dawn on his unfortunate country. All this he had seen, and part of this he was. But besides—what astonishing events passed before his eyes, on the stage of European political, civil and commercial vicissitudes during his life. In his times there was the French Revolution, with all its wide-spread and terrific consequences of bloodshed, war, triumphs and defeats. He was still in France as a student, when Louis XVI. was executed on the scaffold. He witnessed some of the horrors of the revolution. He saw the priesthood of the Church slaughtered by the sanguinary multitude, unchecked by the disordered councils of the State.—He witnessed, if not on the spot, the attempt to abolish Christianity, to dethrone God by denying His existence, and to substitute for the worship of the Supreme Being, a symbolical divinity, called "Human Reason"—an attempt the folly and stupidity of which were almost more than blasphemy. He saw the Corsican adventurer rush into this Chaos and reduce it to partial order—religion renovated—the existence and worship of God re-inaugurated—order re-established amidst what had been anarchy—and this adventurer, as he might at first have been called, rising by the force of his genius, the power of his sword, but, above all, the permission of God, to an undisputed sovereignty, not only over France, but almost over continental Europe.

O'Connell was a sincere Catholic, and the buffetings to which the Church of God during that awful period was exposed, must have affected him deeply.—The Deism and political infidelity which had animated most of the cabinets of Europe, for half a century previous to the outbreak of the French Revolution, were now passing under his eye, from the theories inaugurated by Voltaire into their practical results on society. As an appropriate beginning, the Jesuits had already been suppressed, at the period of O'Connell's birth; but he lived to see them restored, after the malignity of their enemies had been confounded and the hostile intrigues of Anti-Catholic cabinets had been broken up and scattered to the winds. The blows of infidelity reached higher marks, and he saw the head of the Church, Pius VI., dragged into exile; and there, giving up his great soul into the hands of God. He saw Pius VII. also a captive under the hands of secular power. He saw that British government which professed, and, no doubt, professed sincerely, such hatred to the "Pope of Rome," restoring at the expense of blood and treasure, the same illustrious exile, Pius VII. to the chair of St. Peter, and to the freedom which is essential to the head of the Church. He saw a successor to the throne of Louis XVI. re-established in the halls of his royal ancestors; whilst, simultaneously, the great conqueror of Europe, who had dazzled the world by his victories, was condemned to spend the last few years of his life as a chained eagle on a desert rock in the ocean. Two subsequent monarchs of France he saw driven into exile, where they died, unacknowledged by the great nation over whom they had reigned.

Confining his view to Great Britain and Ireland alone, he could not fail to have observed a contest between rival parties, changes in politics, contradictions between principles professed by either party in their modification, variation, and sometimes reversals, according to different times and circumstances. He must have seen the Whigs and Tories of England like gladiators in a pagan coliseum, struggling each for ascendancy over the other. The very changes in the royal families of Europe have been awful lessons of experience, which were exhibited to the steady gaze of Mr. O'Connell, and no man was fitter to comprehend the deep moral and political meaning which they were so well calculated to convey.

But it is not surprising to me that Mr. O'Connell scarcely ever alluded, in his speeches or writings, to

these great and terrible revolutions which were changing from year to year the political and social condition of Europe. Burke had indulged, philosophically, in topics of this kind. But O'Connell had but two loves: the one was the love of his country, the other of his creed, and in his public life, these two became one and indivisible.

In a country like the United States, in which there is no distinction of creed; in a country like ours in which all Christian denominations are equal before the law; and on an occasion like the present, it is far from agreeable to me to allude to rivalry or disagreements between English and Irish, or between Catholics and Protestants, among the Western Islands of Europe.

Yet I think it impossible for any one to conceive a just estimate of the character of Daniel O'Connell, who will not admit in the circumstances of his life and times the distinction which is happily out of place in the free and independent States of the American Republic. O'Connell is by no means the only patriot of Ireland; but he is the only patriot who combined and absorbed into his policy the sympathetic impulses of religion and patriotism, so far as these regarded the feelings and interests of the great mass of his countrymen. Others, whose names it would be hardly necessary to mention here, have probably excelled him in rhetorical and eloquent periods of patriotism, and are entitled to the respect which is due to great talents. But they had not the key of the heart of Ireland—they pleaded and spoke under circumstances which might attest individual devotion, and acquire for them individual fame, but so far as both were concerned, they were but "as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." O'Connell, as a mere Irish patriot, was throughout his life superior to any of the illustrious names which Ireland has been in the habit of cherishing—be they Burke, Grattan, Curran, or any of the others. He was not their inferior in statesmanship, jurisprudence, or eloquence. But he was their superior so far as their country was concerned; he was their equal or more in patriotism, and had, at the same time, by all odds, the advantage over any rivals in opening up the avenues to the heart of the Irish people. He was a Catholic statesman—they were Protestant statesmen—honorable men, if you will, but shut out from any approach to the inner doors of Irish life. O'Connell's life, from the commencement of his public career, seems to have been influenced by the memory of two early, but perpetual dreams—the one promising a hope that he should release his countrymen from the bondage which had been entailed by what is familiarly called the "Union"—the other that he would be enabled to rescue his fellow Catholic countrymen of Ireland, and of the British dominions, from the thraldom and degradation to which, before his day, they had been subjected. In accomplishing the former, he was disappointed by the brevity of human life and other circumstances. In the latter, he succeeded, and during his life he had the happiness to see, mainly through his own exertions, the altars of Ireland, England, Scotland and the colonies of the great British Empire liberated from the degrading thraldom to which by iniquitous legislation they had been previously subjected.

If, with all his patriotism he had been a Protestant, he might like others have distinguished himself by most eloquent speeches against the wrongs inflicted by the State, and in favor of the rights denied.—But then he would have risen to a species of only individual notoriety, and general admiration as a patriotic rhetorician. He would have gone up as a blazing rocket, and descended as a mere stick.—Catholics of hardly less powers than his have exhibited themselves in this way; and so long as they were supposed to be united to the heart of Ireland by deep and undoubted sympathies, they were successively sought to be purchased by the hostile government of their country, or banished or consigned to execution. Ireland has suffered the loss of many able and profoundly patriotic men devoted to her cause, but who sacrificed themselves on even the public interest to the results of their individual aspirations, unsustained by any profound acquired sympathy with the great body of the Irish people.

O'Connell was none of these. He was a statesman as well as a patriot. He understood that in the briefest possible period he could get himself transported to the gibbet at home or the Penal Colony abroad, for the crime of loving, or laboring for, his beloved country. But he was too much of a statesman for a blunder like this. He comprehended from the beginning, that in order to effect great and radical changes in the community, a beginning must be made under the progress of humane ideas, patiently urged and patiently waited for in their progressive amelioration of the social and political condition of a great State. Hence, with all the natural impetuosity of his individual character, he blended the

calmest and wisest philosophy of statesmanship into his policy, in arranging the relations of the means intended to employ, to the end which he was determined to accomplish. For twenty-three years after his admission to public life and his recognition as a distinguished member of the Irish bar, he seems to have studied out the best means whereby to realize the dreams of his life—Catholic Emancipation and the Repeal of the Union with England.

Let us begin with his idea of Catholic Emancipation.

O'Connell brought no hereditary influence into the contest. He was not a Peer; he was not the son of a Peer.—But he had the instinctive consciousness of greatness, which talent and immense acquirement were calculated to inspire. He wished to break the fetters that encircled the altars and the limbs of his Catholic countrymen. The task was immense. The resistance which it compelled him to regard as being necessary to overcome, was the resistance of a certain amount of wisdom on the part of the Catholic clergy of this country; the resistance of the dominant party in Ireland, the virulence of which was proverbial—the Orange party; the resistance of the stolid prejudices of the English yeomanry, so called; the resistance of all the corporations of Great Britain and Ireland, namely, the resistance of the established church; the resistance of the British navy; the resistance of the army; the resistance of the House of Commons—all of them bound by an oath to oppose the idea of Catholic emancipation; the resistance of the House of Lords; the resistance of Peel and Wellington, and Anglesey, and Lord Lyndhurst, and I will say, last, but not least, the resistance of the British monarch himself—George the Fourth. O'Connell comprehended, therefore, what he should have to encounter, and, as I have said before, he began, and partially and prudently laid out his project, which was to collect a few, to speak into their ears words of patriotism, of truth, and of justice; and as he began the emancipation of the Catholics of the British empire, you can easily understand what discouragement it was that he could scarcely get what was called a house to hear him, and a house in those days meant ten persons of an audience; and yet, undismayed when he found only eight he was not discouraged, but rushed into the street, caught two passers by and brought them in; and then he began that agitation which finally triumphed over the apathy of his countrymen, over the virulence of his Orange enemies, over the antagonism of the British Parliament and the prejudices of the British people—finally over the Commons, the Lords, the Cabinets and monarchs, till that same George the Fourth, with an oath of blasphemy, was compelled—it was not voluntary—to sign the act by which O'Connell emancipated the Catholic subjects of his empire in spite of his opposition and all the opposition he could marshal.

I was myself among those, for many years, and even till recently, who thought that credit should have been given much more than O'Connell ever awarded, to Wellington and Peel, on the subject of Catholic emancipation; but a more intimate acquaintance with documents of recent publication satisfies me that they yielded most reluctantly. And when we consider the question of triumph, in a contest, the parties to which are so unequal—an individual on one side, and an empire on the other—and consider the means by which that triumph was brought about, it would be worthy of any statesman to study well the tactics of Daniel O'Connell as a statesman and a politician. This is the only solitary case in history in which an individual has been able to accomplish such great results by means entirely moral and religious. You are all aware of those maxims of which he was the author; how he used to say things which impatient and hot-blooded young patriots could not bear, namely, that "a crime ought not to be committed;" that "the law of God was the best guide for the patriot;" that whoever commits a crime, gives strength to the enemy." In short, he went so far as to say—though it is not to be imagined that he meant it in a literal sense, but figuratively, and for the benefit of his own impetuous countrymen—"that no political amelioration was worth the shedding of one drop of blood." This, of course, was exaggeration; but taking into account that he had to begin to instruct the people, that the circle composed of ten auditors repeated what he said—that the newspapers took it up—that little by little that circle enlarged its circumference till it reached the most remote population of the whole island—you must consider, also, that those poor people, during so long a period of bondage, had been utterly unaccustomed to the discussion of political questions in anything like a popular form—O'Connell's task, the most delicate ever statesman undertook to perform, was to excite his countrymen up to a certain point of interest and zeal, and then to restrain their impetuosity, lest it