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DR. J. D. BRYAN'S LECTURE BEFORE THE PHILOPATRIAN CATHOLIC INSTITUTE, PHILADELPHIA.

(From the Catholic Instructor.)

"CATHOLICITY ESSENTIAL TO THE PERPETUITY OF OUR REPUBLIC."

The Lecturer took the ground that the Catholic Church is the sole parent of true civilisation. The Catholic Church, and it alone, has converted Pagan nations, and civilised them. All the true civilisation that exists in the nineteenth century is derived from the Catholic Church, and whatever is not so derived is not true civilisation. Hence, all the efforts of whatever is not Catholicity—as Protestantism, or its synonyme Infidelity—are nothing more or less than efforts to destroy Christian or true civilisation, and degrade society to its primitive barbarism. With this preface he stated the two leading propositions of the lecture—namely, that American society is rapidly retrograding towards the gloomy and cheerless state of infidelity; and that, unless restrained by true religion—by Catholicity—its ultimate destiny must be barbarism.

Having made these two general propositions, the lecturer took a general view of the nations of the world which had, at any time, received the doctrines of Christianity, and showed that all those people who had once been Christian, and had become recreant to the faith, have degenerated into their primitive barbarism. Africa was once Christianised and civilised, but it cast off the faith of Christ, because Arian, heretic, Protestant; and the Church of Africa, once so flourishing, which had given to the Church a St. John Chrysostom, a Cyril, an Origen, a Tertullian, and a host of holy men and women, is now blotted from the page of history, and nothing remains of it but the names of the Saes, where once her saintly Bishops sat, and taught the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Egypt, Asia Minor, and the whole eastern portion of the Roman empire, once Christianised and civilised, also became infected with Arianism and other heresies, protested against the Church, and are now all, without exception, sunk into barbarism. But not so with those nations which preserved the faith of Christ intact, since all the nations which in primitive times formed part of the Catholic Church, and kept the faith, are now among the first and most renowned nations of Christendom.

The Catholic Church was endowed by its Divine Founder with certain attributes, which were destined to characterise it in all times. Of these the lecturer enumerated two as especially suitable for the subject of his discourse—the essentiality of Catholicity to preserve our Republic—namely, Unity and Perpetuity. After dwelling upon these two marks of the Church, at some length, showing that all other forms of religion fritter away, and die, he demonstrated the immovable steadfastness of the Church; and here we cannot do better than to give, as near as possible, his own words—The Catholic Church, then alone, cemented by unity, and sealed with Heaven's own signet, perpetuity, smiles at decay, knows no decline; and even when seemingly swept away from any section of the earth, Phoenix-like, arises from its own ashes with renovated life and increased vitality. The Goths, the Vandals, the Huns, the Suevi, barbarians of the North, sweep down upon, and desolate her most fertile provinces; but indued with power from on High, she springs immortal from her desolation, rallies under the banner of the Cross, and converts her desolators, re-molds their rugged natures, and re-constructs the Church in more than its pristine glory. And when, in the course of ages, the wild storms of the sixteenth century arise, and frenzied man again distracts her sacred peace, and passionately tears his spiritual mother's breasts though grievously wounded, yet, as deathless as before, she stretches her maternal arms across the broad Atlantic, and more than supplies her loss by gathering into the Household of Faith the uncounted millions of an entire continent. And now, what is her aspect in the nineteenth century? Whilst those who vainly seek her destruction, are reducing their strength by suicidal divisions—while Germany, where modern Protestantism first began, is rapidly sinking into infidelity, is denying the revelation of God, and interpreting, according to the rules of human science, the miracles whereby the Son of God proved his mission—while Geneva is denying the Divinity of Christ—while the infidel communists of France are uttering their insane ravings against all religion—while the socialists of England and North America, and the infidel red republicans every where are seeking to throw off all restraint of human, as well as of divine law, the Catholic Church stands at this moment, upright and firm—the sole conservative power of Europe and the world—fresh as in her youth—buoyant as the young eagle—vigorous as the war-horse in the battle, her unity as firm, her perpetuity as indelibly delineated on her venerable front, her numbers more multiplied and multiplying than in

any former period of her history, and her zeal as apostolic as when her Divine Lord first sent her forth upon her mission to convert the world.

The lecturer here went into a searching analysis of civilisation; we have space only for the conclusion of his argument. His proposition was, that true civilisation consists in the possession and practice of true religion; without whose sublime virtue, inimitable charity, exalted morality, pure instruction, salutary restraints, and holy but absolute commands, we would be inferior to Pagan Greece and Rome; as they, except true religion, had most of the accidents of life, which depend upon mere human energy, in excess of us. If then, true civilisation consists in the possession and practice of true religion, that is, true Christianity—and this is not denied—then, that people, which is totally without this sole civiliser and enlightener, must be barbarian. Suppose, then, it could be affirmed of the American people, that they are totally without true Christianity; what would forbid the logical consequence—a state of barbarism? Nothing, by their own admission.

Again, if civilisation depends upon true Christianity the most that can be admired of a people, which partially receives and partially rejects it, is, that they are partially civilised; and if that people be a barbarous nation in the process of conversion to Christianity, that it is becoming civilised; but if it be a nation once converted, and in the process of departing from, or rejecting, Christianity, that it is declining from civilisation, and retrograding towards barbarism. Now, it is not affirmed that the American people are totally without Christianity; but it is affirmed, that they only partially receive it, and partially reject it. The American people are not then, religiously, in a settled state. There are religious movement, transition, various religious experiments, and change from one to another, and from something to nothing. Are they a barbarous people, in process of conversion to Christianity? Manifestly not. They must then be a people, or an agglomeration of peoples, which, once Christian are now striving in various degrees to get rid of the requirements of Christianity; some dispensing with less, others more, and many rejecting it altogether. If this be so, then they must be a people tending, more or less rapidly towards barbarism; and reiterating the original proposition, unless so restrained by true Christianity, as to be brought back to the practice of its sacred duties, that must be their ultimate destiny.

Here followed an account of the various systems of religion which prevail amongst us, and which were shown to be the fruitful sources of infidelity; and which, so far from saving the people from, are proved to be the very elements which precipitate them into barbarism. And here, observed the lecturer, since it is my desire and intention to present the fairest picture of Protestantism that can be justly drawn, I will eliminate from the inquiry those Protestants who discard all religion, who declare the whole system of Christianity a "humbug;" who affirm of the entire body of Revelation, that it is a falsehood;—who, in a word, deny everything, except the phenomena of natural science. These are, by their own declaration, undisguised infidels, and have therefore reached a point which renders argument unnecessary. They are barbarian now. There is another class, one grade higher than these, which I shall also eliminate. These have the King James' edition of the Bible, and the Protestant rule of faith, "Private Interpretation;" they have also their places of worship, their religious leaders, their Theological Seminaries, and all the usual appendages of religious denominations; and they comprise the Unitarians, a very extensive body, who deny the divinity of Christ. Included under these, though they are somewhat lower in the scale, are the Socialists, Communists, Fourierites, Fanny Wrightists, and those who associate for Woman's Rights. Under this head must also be enumerated a large portion of the Society of Friends, which have followed the leadership of Elias Hicks, and who also deny the divinity of Christ, and all the miracles of Revelation, and use the Bible merely as a book of moral lessons; all, to be sure, in the legitimate exercise of the Protestant rule of faith,— "Private Interpretation"—which allows a man to interpret the Sacred Scriptures so as to favor every vagary of the human imagination. And, finally, I will eliminate the Mormons, or "Latter Day Saints," (now a considerable item among the sects, and threatening to monopolise a whole State to themselves.) We have now, even according to the account of some of the Protestants themselves, got rid of a great deal of trase, and have reduced our analysis to about six denominations, namely, the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Universalists, and the Friends or Quakers. These, according to their own account, are the embodiment of all the righteousness of the nation; they are the ten righteous of Sodom, on whose account the city is not destroyed. But

amazing and humiliating thought! to what, in the effort to get the pure essence of Protestantism, have we reduced the boasted Protestant nation? To four millions and a-half; not one-fifth of the entire population. All the rest, of twenty-four millions, except about two millions of Catholics, being either open Infidels, or indifferent, or violently opposed to all religion. What a fearful stride is here displayed towards barbarism. And let us now examine how far behind them is this pure essence of Protestantism? At the close of the "World's Convention," held by the Protestant ministers in London, a few years ago, it was proclaimed, somewhat impiously, to the world, that the prayer of the Redeemer was at last fulfilled, and that it could now be affirmed of the Christian Church—meaning Protestantism—that it is a unit, one! I will, therefore, for the moment, endeavor to consider these denominations as one body. It will, I fear, be but a man of straw,—I will not misrepresent them. Each one shall speak for himself. They shall represent the Apostles, if you like, commissioned by the Redeemer to teach the world. Each one has King James' translation of the Bible; each one is, according to his own account, orthodox. Here they stand arrayed before you. One of them, the Universalist Apostle, commences to teach and in an elaborate argument proves, from his Bible, that there is no place of eternal punishment—no hell. The Methodist Apostle shows you, from the same book, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God;" but he, at the same time shows you, in a manner equally conclusive, that Baptismal Regeneration is not a doctrine of the Christian Church. "There, you are wrong,"—exclaims the High Church Episcopalian Apostle—"our Church plainly teaches the contrary, Baptismal Regeneration, though all our people, unfortunately, do not believe it, and our Bishops—" "Your Bishops, be fiddled, old rag of the Pope!" interrupts the Presbyterian Apostle, "no such order belongs to the Church; we are as much in sacred orders, without them, as any of you, and can as well administer the Sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism." "Baptism and the Lord's Supper!" chimes in the Quaker Apostle "there is nothing of the kind taught in the Bible. The Divine head of the Society never meant that we should understand Him carnally, but spiritually."—"Perverse leaders of the people," ejaculates the Baptist Apostle, "do you not see by the plain words of the Scriptures, that you are all wrong; that you must indeed be baptized, and that too with water; but that sprinkling, or infusion, is no Baptism at all; to be truly baptized, one must be totally immersed."

Such is this one body, this apostolic college, or rather this Babel of confused tongues. Did the great Head of His Church commission such a body of contradictory teachers? Did He ever establish a system of such opposing elements? Consider Protestantism as a unit, and it is infidel, totally infidel now; it does not believe the plainest doctrines of the Christian Church, far less it is united upon them. Dismiss from your minds the absurd idea of Protestantism being a unit, and let each sect stand, as it truly does, alone—each one independent of the other. Then, looking at each denomination singly, I affirm of it that it does not believe the doctrines which it individually professes to believe. Had we time to trace the histories of these denominations, from their commencement, we would find that the doctrines which were first taught in them are not now known; and if the heresiarchs, who originated them, could return to the earth they would not recognise the sects which are called by their names. And it is directly on account of this diversity of opinions, upon the same points of doctrine, that each of the denominations is perpetually dividing and sub-dividing until there are all sorts of Presbyterians, New School, Old School, New Lights, and Old Lights, Cumberland Presbyterians and Blue Stockings; all sorts of Episcopalians, High Church, Low Church, Loose Churchmen, Tight Churchmen, Puseyites and anti-Puseyites; all sorts of Baptists; Baptists and Anabaptists, Mennonites, Particular or Calvinistic Baptists, and General or Armenian Baptists, Close Communion Baptists, and Free Communion, Hunkers, Tunkers, Tumblers, Hard Shell and Soft Shell Baptists. And so of all the rest—all opposing, denouncing each other, holding no communion with one another, and each declaring that the other has departed from the truth. In that alone they are right. But why is this if they believe that revelation contains fixed doctrines—the doctrines peculiar to each sect? The simplest Catholic child knows what these wisecracks seem not to see—that if any given doctrine be really a doctrine of the Church, that to change it is blasphemy; and yet they heed it not, but go on splitting and dividing, and each division, though it believe the direct opposite of another division, is proclaimed to be right, orthodox; and each one tells you, with sanctimonious gravity—"Oh,

it is of no consequence; we are all one—a unit! The prayer of the Redeemer is at last fulfilled in us." Their pretensions are a burlesque upon human language, and their solemn trilling with the religion of Christ is blasphemy. I ask, in the name of sacred truth, if such fickleness as they display in the momentous affair of salvation, such wavering to and fro, tossing about of every wind of doctrine and wave of private opinion, be not calculated to precipitate any community into total infidelity—unbelief in all revealed religion? They who do not so read the Book of Human Life must be blind indeed.

Protestantism, continued the Lecturer, is not only essentially destructive of itself, but also of civil government; and if there be no other ark of safety for us as a people, there is nothing in the dim vista of the future but the destruction and loss of our united nationality. This was proved, in part, by the following considerations—a nation of infidels is as impossible as anomalous; the principle which forms the Protestant rule of action, "private interpretation," is suicidal; it makes the doctrines of the State, as well as those of the Church, like matter, infinitely divisible; it is the fruitful parent of discord, whether in society, among families, or between individuals; it has sundered the holiest bonds of unity; it has originated national discord, and overturned every government in which it has found a successful foothold; and lastly, those who defy the Lord of Heaven, trifle with His revealed will, and disobey His laws, will not, do not, find it difficult to cast off the fear of man, and set all human government at naught.

The commencement of this result was shown to have already lowered upon us even in the infancy of the Republic. We cannot refer at length to the numerous evidences the Lecturer adduced to demonstrate this fact. He referred to the splitting up of the religious denominations upon the slavery question, and said, so frenzied have the various sections of the country become on this subject, that South Carolina is busy in the manufacture of arms and munitions of war, to maintain her resistance to the Federal government, while the politico-religious fanatics of Massachusetts, and of every other free State of the Union, stand in an attitude scarcely less treasonable, bidding defiance to the laws in public and in private places, denouncing them as the bullion of the infernal pit, not to be obeyed; and, to cap the climax of their insane folly, pursuing the officers of the law, and meting out to them wounds and bruises, and bloodshed and death. And all this agitation—this rending asunder of what they declare to be the Church of Christ—all this threatened dissolution of the Union, arises simply because some ignorant sectarian zealots are pleased to act upon their own private judgment in what they consider a religious question.

That which has here been presented as the evidence of a fact, is only one instance of a long series, illustrative of a general principle of action. Liberty has run into licentiousness, and the idea of a "Higher Law," the Superintendence of a Superior Power, in the affairs of man, in a national point of view, is not only lost sight of, but by many, even in high places, ridiculed. The ancient rule of true Christianity—"Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but from God; and those that are, are ordained of God.—Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."—Rom. iii., 1, 2.—is not the principle which now guides the people, and compels them to preserve their allegiance to the American Government. The prevailing impulse, and the language, of the great mass of the people, is *we*, in the power of our own might, and by the force of our own independent will, have constructed this government, made its laws, and constituted its authorities. We look to no being as our Superior Power; we are free to disobey, if the acts of the creature of our will do not please us. Hence, in every section of the Union, men, as the phrase is, "take the law in their own hands;" the pistol and the bowie-knife regulate their disputes. "Judge Lynch," with his ever ready rope, hangs the poor object of popular vengeance upon the nearest tree, without a moment's warning. Vigilance committees, not known to the Law, are formed, to regulate, not only the offenders against constituted authorities, but the constituted authorities themselves. Anti-renters, imitating ruthless savages, and emulating them in deeds of blood, resist to the death the payment of just claims upon property whose benefits they reap. Piratical expeditions, against our peaceful neighbors, are organised in our midst, in defiance of the laws of the country, in despite of the sacred pledge of treaties, and the representatives of those governments fly for their lives from our midst. The torch of the incendiary is applied to every building, the object of whose erection is distasteful to the populace, sparing neither schools, nor religious houses, nor even the temples of the Living God, and riot rages rampant in all our most populous cities.